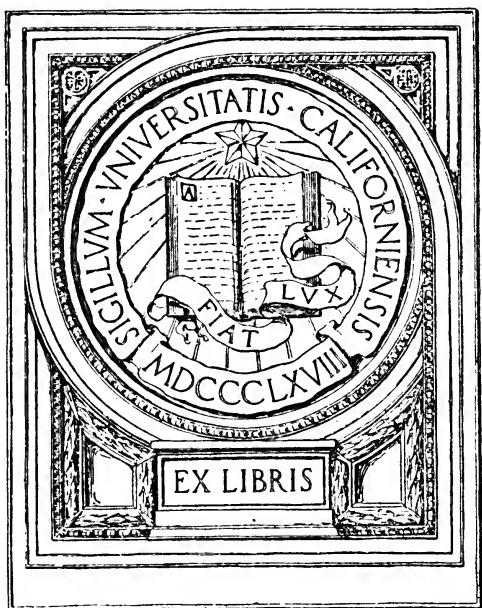


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ALLISON'S LAD
AND
OTHER MARTIAL INTERLUDES

Being six one-act dramas

set forth by

BEULAH MARIE DIX

Co-author with Evelyn Greenleaf Sutherland of the plays

"The Road to Yesterday," "The Breed of the Treshams," etc.,
and author of the novels "The Making of Christopher Ferringham,"
"Blount of Breckenhow," etc.



NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

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THE
HOLT
PUBLISHING
COMPANY
NEW YORK

TO
THE LIVING MEMORY
OF
EVELYN GREENLEAF SUTHERLAND

401065

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ALLISON'S LAD

THE PEOPLE

COLONEL SIR WILLIAM STRICKLAND	}	of the Cavalier party
CAPTAIN GEORGE BOWYER		
LIEUTENANT ROBERT GORING		
FRANCIS HOPTON } gentlemen		
TOM WINWOOD } volunteers		
COLONEL JOHN DRUMMOND, of the Roundhead party		

THE PLACE

The village of Faringford, in the western midlands
of England

THE PERIOD

The close of the Second Civil War, autumn 1648

ALLISON'S LAD

IT is midnight of a cheerless autumn day, with a drizzle of slow rain. In an upper chamber of the village inn of Faringford, lit by guttering candles and a low fire that smolders on the hearth, are gathered five gentlemen of the Cavalier party, made prisoners that morning in a disastrous skirmish.

In a great arm-chair by the hearth (at stage left) sits their leader, SIR WILLIAM STRICKLAND. He is a tall, keen man of middle age, of the finest type of his party, a gallant officer and a high-souled gentleman. He has received a dangerous wound in the side, which has been but hastily dressed, and he now leans heavily in his chair, with eyes closed, almost oblivious of what goes on about him.

His captain, and friend of long standing, GEORGE BOWYER, a sanguine, stalwart gentleman of STRICKLAND'S own years, has planted himself in the center of the room, where he is philosophically smoking at a long pipe, while he watches the play at the rude table, which stands at the (stage) right.

Round the table, on rough stools, GORING, HOPTON, and WINWOOD sit dicing and smoking, with a jug of ale between them for the cheering of their captivity. GORING is a swaggering young soldier of fortune; HOPTON, a gentleman of the Temple, turned soldier,

with something of the city fop still to be traced in his bearing. He has been wounded, and bears about his forehead a blood-flecked bandage. WINWOOD, the third gamester, is a mere lad of seventeen, smooth-faced, comely, with a gallant carriage.

It is to be noted that the men play but half-heartedly. Indeed, the cheerlessness of the midnight hour, in the dim chamber, with the rain tapping on the mullioned windows, may well bring home to them the dubiousness of their captive state and set them to anxious question of what the dawn may have in store. GORING, of the three the most hardened and professionally a soldier, is the first to speak, as he throws the dice.

GORING.

Cinq and tray!

WINWOOD.

The main is yours, Rob Goring.

GORING.

That's a brace of angels you owe me, Frank Hopton.

HOPTON.

Go ask them of the scurvy Roundhead had the stripping of my pockets.

BOWYER

(With the good-humored contempt of the professional for the amateur).

The more fool you to bear gold about you when you ride into a fight!

WINWOOD.

A devil fly off with the money! The rebels have taken my horse—a plague rot them!

GORING.

Faith, I'd care not, if the prick-eared brethren had not got me, and got me fast. 'Tis your throw, Tom Winwood.

[WINWOOD takes the dice-box, but pauses, anxiously awaiting an answer to HOPTON'S next question.]

HOPTON.

What think you, Captain Bowyer? Are they like to admit us speedily to ransom?

[BOWYER shakes his head, smiling, half indifferent.]

GORING.

You're swift to grumble, Frank. You've not been yet ten hours a prisoner. Throw, Tom, a wildfire burn you!

WINWOOD.

There, then! And vengeance profitable gaming! We can't muster four farthings amongst us.

GORING.

Curse it, man, we play for love and sport! I've never yet had enough of casting the dice. Look you,
[Casts the dice.]

I better you by three.

WINWOOD.

On my life, no! I threw a tray and quatre.

GORING.

Go to with your jesting! You mean a tray and deuce.

WINWOOD.

Tray and quatre I threw.

GORING

(Starts to his feet, with his hand leaping to draw the sword which, as a prisoner, he no longer wears).

Will you give me the lie in my teeth?

WINWOOD

(Pluckily springs to his feet, with the same impulse).

Aye, if you say I threw——

[At the sound of the angry voices and of the stools thrust back, STRICKLAND opens his eyes and glances toward the brawlers.]

BOWYER

(Laying a heavy hand upon a shoulder of each).

Hold your tongues, you shuttle-headed fools!

[Thrusts GORING down into his seat.]

HOPTON.

You'll rouse the Colonel, and he ill and wounded.
Sit you down again!

WINWOOD

(Dropping sullenly into his place).

7 Yet 'twas a tray and quatre.

GORING.

Frank, you saw the cast. A tray and deuce, and I will so maintain it.

[The three at table talk heatedly in dumb-show, HOPTON playing the peace-maker, until at last he wins the disputants to shake hands. Meantime BOWYER has gone anxiously to STRICKLAND'S side.]

BOWYER.

How is it with you, Will, old lad? Your wound is easier?

STRICKLAND.

My wound? 'Tis nothing, I tell you.

BOWYER.

Why, then, take heart! Matters might well be worse.

[He takes a candle from the chimneypiece, and relights his pipe.]

STRICKLAND.

Cold comfort, George!

BOWYER.

We are defeated, prisoners, yes, I grant you. Yet we have fought our best. And for the future—by this

light, our enemies have used us handsomely so far! No doubt they'll speedily accept of ransom.

STRICKLAND

(With eyes fixed on WINWOOD).

From my heart I hope so!

BOWYER.

Aye, to be taken thus in his first fight, 'tis pity for little Tom Winwood.

STRICKLAND.

You say——

BOWYER.

'Tis of the lad yonder that you are thinking.

STRICKLAND.

Yes. I was thinking of Allison's lad.

[As the result of HOPTON'S persuasion, WINWOOD at that moment is most heartily drinking a health to GORING.]

BOWYER.

My cousin Allison's boy. Look but upon him now! A half minute ago he and Rob Goring were ready to fly at each other's throats, and now they drink good-fellowship together. Faith, by times young Tom is monstrous like unto his father.

STRICKLAND.

Your pardon! Tom is his mother's son, Allison's lad, every inch of him—every thought of him. There's no taint of the father in the boy.

BOWYER.

Yes. I wonder not that you speak thus of Jack Winwood. 'Twas a damnable trick he served you, when he won Allison from you with his false tales.

STRICKLAND.

Aye, and well-nigh broke her heart thereafter with his baseness. You stood beside me, George, there at Edgehill, when we looked upon the death-wound—in his back!

BOWYER.

Poor wretch! Gallant enough at the charge, but at two o'clock in the morning he'd no more courage than——

STRICKLAND.

He was a coward, and false from first to last. For God's sake, George, never say that boy is like his father! For his mother's sake——

BOWYER.

Aye, 'twould go near to killing Allison, should Tom prove craven.

STRICKLAND.

He'll never prove craven. He's his mother's son. Let be, George! I'm in no mood for speech.

[BOWYER goes back to the table, where WINWOOD, in the last minutes, has played with notable listlessness and indifference.]

HOPTON.

'Tis your cast, Tom.

WINWOOD.

Nay, but I'm done!

GORING.

Will you give over?

WINWOOD.

But for a moment. My pipe is out.

[Rises, and goes to STRICKLAND.]

HOPTON.

Come, Captain! In good time! Bear a hand with us.

[BOWYER sits in WINWOOD's place at table, and dices.]

WINWOOD.

You called me, sir?

STRICKLAND.

I did not call, but I was thinking of you. Sit you down!

[WINWOOD sits on a stool at the opposite side of the hearth, and cleans and fills his pipe.]

I watched you to-day, Tom. You bore yourself fairly in the fight. I was blithe to see it.

WINWOOD.

God willing, you'll see better in the next fight, sir.

STRICKLAND.

Go to! You did all that might be asked of a youth for the first time under fire.

WINWOOD.

Ah, but 'twas my second time under fire, sir.

STRICKLAND.

Second time? How's that, my boy?

WINWOOD.

Last June, faith, I was at Bletchingley when we held the house four hours against the rebels, my school-fellow, Lord Bletchingley, and I, and the servants. I came by a nick in the arm there. I still have the scar to show.

[Rises eagerly, and puts back his sleeve to show the scar.]

STRICKLAND

(Lightly).

'Twas right unfriendly of you, Tom, to keep me so in the dark, touching your exploits.

WINWOOD

(Half embarrassed with the sense of having said too much, turns from STRICKLAND and lights his pipe with the candle that he takes from the chimney-piece).

Truth, sir, I was shamed to speak to you of Bletchingley.

STRICKLAND.

Shamed? What do you talk of?

WINWOOD.

Why, our fight at Bletchingley, it must seem mere child's play unto you, a tried soldier, my father's old comrade.

[He speaks the word "father" with all the proper pride that a son should show.]

STRICKLAND.

But your mother. She would have been proud to know that you had borne you well in the fight. You should have told her, Tom.

WINWOOD

(In swift alarm).

Told my mother? Why, sir, she—she would have been troubled. Perchance she would not have heard to my going out for the King with you, because of Bletchingley.

STRICKLAND.

Why because of Bletchingley?

WINWOOD.

Why? Well, you see, sir—sure, 'twas there I had this wound.

[Reseats himself on the stool opposite STRICKLAND.]

STRICKLAND.

And for that you think she would have kept you from the field? Lad, you do not altogether know your mother.

[BOWYER, *at the end of a talk in dumb-show with GORING and HOPTON, has risen, and now goes out at the single door, wide and heavy, that leads from the chamber (center, back) to the outer corridor. At the sound of the closing of the door, STRICKLAND starts.*

What was that?

GORING

(Rises and salutes).

'Twas Captain Bowyer, sir, went into the outer room to speak with the sentries.

[Reseats himself.

HOPTON.

Heaven send he get them to talk! I'd fain know what's to become of us.

GORING

(Stretching himself).

Go sleep, like a wise man, and cease your fretting!

[He presently rests his head on his folded arms, which he places on the table, and goes to sleep.

STRICKLAND.

Sound advice, Tom! You were best take it.

ALLISON'S LAD

WINWOOD

(Smoking throughout).

7 Sleep? How can I, sir? I would it were day. I hate this odd and even time o' night. What think you will come of us?

STRICKLAND.

What matters it, boy? We have fought our fight, and you bore yourself gallantly, Tom.

WINWOOD.

20 Easy to do, sir, in the daylight, with your comrades about you, but this—this waiting in the dark! God! I would it were day. At two in the morning I've no more courage than——

STRICKLAND

(In sharp terror).

Tom! Hold your peace.

[BOWYER comes again into the room. HOPTON springs eagerly to his feet.]

HOPTON.

What news, Captain?

BOWYER.

Bad. They're quitting the village this same hour.

GORING.

As A retreat by night?

[Rises and confers in dumb-show with HOPTON.]

win dow?

BOWYER.

Your wound cannot endure this hasty moving, Will. In mere humanity they must let you rest here at the inn. You'll give them your parole.

STRICKLAND.

You'll talk to our captors of paroles, after so many paroles have been broken by men that are a shame unto our party?

BOWYER.

But you are known for a man of honor. And by happy chance the colonel in command of these rebels has come hither within the hour. He will listen to me. I knew him of old—one John Drummond.

WINWOOD.

Drummond!

[His hand clenches convulsively upon his pipe, which snaps sharply under the pressure.]

[COLONEL DRUMMOND enters the room. He is a grave, stern gentleman of middle age, in military dress, with cuirass, and sword at side. WINWOOD, at his entrance, shifts his position so that his back is toward him, and sits thus, with head bent and hands tight clenched.]

BOWYER.

In good time, Colonel Drummond!

DRUMMOND

(Throughout with the fine dignity of a soldier and a gentleman).

I fear not, Captain. There are three of you here in presence with whom I must have a word.

[Seats himself at table.

Lieutenant Goring!

GORING.

(With some swagger).

Well, sir?

DRUMMOND.

At Raglan Castle you gave your promise never again to bear arms against the Parliament. Now that you are taken with arms in your hands, have you aught to say in your defense?

GORING.

Before I gave that promise to your damned usurping Parliament, I swore to serve the King. I keep the earlier oath.

DRUMMOND.

And for that you will answer in this hour. Now you, Mr. Hopton!

BOWYER.

Frank Hopton, too?

DRUMMOND.

What defense is yours for your breach of parole?

HOPTON.

It was forced from me. A forced promise, faith,
'tis void in the courts of law.

DRUMMOND.

It well may be, but not in a court of war.

STRICKLAND.

George! Did he say there were—three had broken
faith?

DRUMMOND.

And now for you, Thomas Winwood!

(*[WINWOOD starts to his feet, but does not face]*)

DRUMMOND.

BOWYER.

Tom! Not you!

DRUMMOND.

Last June at Bletchingley, you, sir, gave to me personally your word of honor never again to take up arms——

STRICKLAND

(*Rising, for the moment unwounded, with all his strength*).

Face that scoundrel! Face him and tell him that he lies!

WINWOOD

(*Unwillingly turns and faces DRUMMOND, but stammers when he tries to speak*).

I—I——

STRICKLAND.

Speak out!

DRUMMOND.

Well, Mr. Winwood?

STRICKLAND.

Answer! The truth! The truth! Have you broken your parole?

WINWOOD

(Desperately at bay, with his back to the wall, his comely young face for the moment the face of his coward and trickster father).

2
God's death! I've done no more than a hundred others have done. They've not kept faith with us, the cursed rebels. Why the fiend's name should we keep faith with them? It was a forced promise. And the King, I was fain to serve him, as my father served him, like my father——

STRICKLAND.

Like your father!

[He staggers where he stands, a wounded man, a sick man—mortally sick at heart.

Allison's lad!

BOWYER

(Catching STRICKLAND as he staggers).

Will!

STRICKLAND

(Masters himself and stands erect).

Let be! Colonel Drummond, I ask your pardon for my words, a moment since. I could not believe—I could not believe——

[He sinks upon his chair.

He is his father's son, George! His father's son!

DRUMMOND.

Come here, Winwood!

[Heavily WINWOOD goes across the room and halts by the table, but throughout he keeps his dazed and miserable eyes on STRICKLAND.

You realize well, the three of you, that by the breaking of your paroles you have forfeited your lives unto the Parliament.

HOPTON.

Our lives? You've no warrant——

DRUMMOND

(Laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword).

I have good warrant—here. I was minded first to stand the three of you against the wall in the court below and have you shot, in the presence of your misguided followers.

BOWYER.

Colonel Drummond, I do protest!

DRUMMOND.

You waste your words, sir. This hour I purpose to give a lesson to all the promise-breakers of your party.

GORING.

You purpose, then, to butcher us, all three?

DRUMMOND.

Your pardon! Two of you I shall admit to mercy. The third——

HOPTON.

Well! Which of us is to be the third?

DRUMMOND.

You may choose by lot which one of you shall suffer. You have dice here. Throw, and he who throws lowest——

HOPTON

(With a burst of half hysterical laughter).

Heaven's light, Rob, for once ye'll have enough of casting the dice!

DRUMMOND.

Winwood, you are the youngest. You shall throw first. Winwood!

[WINWOOD *stands as if dazed, his eyes still on*
STRICKLAND.

GORING.

Are you gone deaf, Tom Winwood?

WINWOOD

(Thrusts out a groping hand).

I—I—— Give me the dice!

HOPTON

(Putting the dice-box into WINWOOD's hand).

Here! Be quick!

*[A moment's pause, while WINWOOD, with twitching face, shakes the box and shakes again.]*GORING.

For God's love, throw!

WINWOOD

(Throws, uncovers dice, and averts his eyes).

What is it?

DRUMMOND.

Seven is your cast. You, Hopton!

[Feverishly HOPTON snatches the box, shakes, and casts quickly.]

Eleven!

HOPTON

(Almost hysterically).

God be thanked for good luck! God be thanked!

GORING.

Damn you! Hold your tongue!

[HOPTON snatches a cup from the table and drinks thirstily. GORING throws and holds dice for a moment covered.]

It's between us now, Tom!

WINWOOD

(Wiping his forehead with his sleeve).

Yes.

[GORING uncovers the dice.

DRUMMOND.

Eight!

GORING

(With a long breath of relief).

Ah!

DRUMMOND

(Rising).

The lot has fallen upon you, Mr. Winwood.

WINWOOD.

I am—at your disposal, sir.

DRUMMOND.

You have ten minutes in which to make you ready.

GORING.

Ten minutes!

[WINWOOD sinks heavily into his old seat at table. Presently he draws to him the dice and box, and mechanically throws again and again.]

BOWYER

(Intercepting DRUMMOND, as he turns to leave the room).

You shall listen to me, Drummond. The boy's my kinsman. He——

DRUMMOND.

Stand aside, George Bowyer!

[He goes out of the room.]

BOWYER

(Following DRUMMOND out).

Yet you shall listen! Drummond! Listen to me!

HOPTON.

But 'tis mere murder. 'Tis against all law.

GORING.

Will you prattle of law to Cromwell's men?

[Comes to table and lays a hand on WINWOOD'S shoulder.]

Tom, lad, I would we could help you.

WINWOOD.

I've thrown the double six—twice. 'Tis monstrous droll, eh, Rob? Before—I could throw no higher than seven—no higher than seven!

[His voice rises higher and higher, and breaks into shrill laughter.]

GORING.

Steady! Steady, lad!

[STRICKLAND looks up, as if rousing from a trance.]

HOPTON

(Hastily fills a cup and offers it to WINWOOD).

Here, Tom, drink this down.

WINWOOD

(Snatches the cup and starts to drink, but in the act looks up and reads in his comrades' faces the fear that is on them, that he is about to disgrace the colours that he wears. He sets down the cup).

You—you think—— Will you—leave me—for these minutes? A' God's name, let me be!

[HOPTON and GORING draw away to the window and stand watching WINWOOD anxiously. He has taken up the dice-box, and again is mechanically casting the dice.

HOPTON.

How will he bear himself yonder?

GORING.

You mean——

HOPTON.

There in the courtyard, when they——

GORING.

Speak lower!

STRICKLAND

(Rises with effort, crosses, and lays his hand on WINWOOD'S shoulder).

Tom!

WINWOOD

(Starting up, furiously).

You're ashamed of me! You're ashamed! Don't pity me! Let me be! Curse you, let me be!

STRICKLAND

(Sternly).

Tom! Look at me!

WINWOOD

(Turns defiantly, meets STRICKLAND'S eyes, and desperately clings to him).

I can't! I can't! If they'll wait till it's light—but now—in the dark—— Make them wait till morning! I can't bear it! I can't bear it!

STRICKLAND.

Be still! You must face it, and face it gallantly.

WINWOOD

(Stands erect, fighting hard for self-control).

Gallantly. Yes. My father—he died for the King. I mustn't disgrace him. I must bear myself as he would have done. I——

STRICKLAND.

Don't speak of him! Think on your mother.

WINWOOD.

Must you tell her—why they shot me? She would think of it—of that broken promise—as a woman might. God's life! Why will you judge me so? My father would have understood.

STRICKLAND.

Yes. He would have understood you well.

WINWOOD.

What do you mean? I'm a coward—a promise-breaker. You think that. But my father—he died for the King. He——

[In STRICKLAND'S face he reads that of which in all these years he has been kept in ignorance.]

How did my father die?

STRICKLAND.

Not now, Tom!

[BOWYER comes again into the room.]

WINWOOD

(Almost beside himself).

Answer me! Answer me! Bowyer! You're my cousin. Tell me the truth! As God sees us! How did my father die? How did my father live? You won't answer? You've lied! You've lied! All of you—all these years! He was a coward. You don't deny it! A coward—a false coward—and I'm his son! I'm his son!

[Sinks upon a stool, by the table, with face hidden, and breaks into rending sobs.]

BOWYER.

Will! Will! You can bear no more.

STRICKLAND

(Shakes off BOWYER'S arm and goes to WINWOOD).

Stand up! Stand up! You are your mother's son as well as his!

WINWOOD

(Rising blindly, as if STRICKLAND'S voice alone had power to lift him).

A coward! You see. Like him. And there in the courtyard—— Ah, God! I'll break! I'll break!

STRICKLAND.

You will not. For her sake—for her blood that is in you—Allison's lad!

WINWOOD

(With slow comprehension).

You—loved her!

STRICKLAND.

Yes. And love that part of her that is in you. And know that you will bear you well unto the end.

WINWOOD.

I'll—I'll—— It's not the death. It's not that. It's the moment—before the bullet—— God! If I fail—if I fail——

STRICKLAND.

You will not fail.

WINWOOD.

You believe that? You can believe that of me?

STRICKLAND.

I believe that, Tom.

BOWYER.

Will! The ten minutes are ended.

STRICKLAND.

So soon! So soon!

BOWYER.

Drummond will suffer me be with him to the last.
Come, Tom, my lad!

[Goes up, and from a chair beside the door takes a heavy military cloak—which shall thereafter serve as WINWOOD'S shroud. He holds it throughout so that WINWOOD may not mark it.]

WINWOOD

(Takes his hat, and turns to GORING and HOPTON, with a pitiful effort at jauntiness).

God be wi' you, boys!

[Crosses, and holds out his hand to STRICKLAND.]

Sir William! I'll—try. But—can't you help me?
Can't you help me when——

[Clings to STRICKLAND'S hand.]

STRICKLAND.

I can help you. You shall bear you as becomes her son.

WINWOOD.

Aye, sir.

STRICKLAND.

And I shall know it. God keep you!

WINWOOD

(Faces about, to BOWYER).

I am ready, sir.

[Goes to door, and on the threshold wheels and stands at salute.]

You shall have news of me, Sir William!

[WINWOOD goes out, and BOWYER, with the cloak, follows after him.]

HOPTON.

What did he mean?

~~GORING.~~

He'll die bravely, poor lad, I'll swear to that!

[STRICKLAND sways slightly where he stands.]

Sir William! You're near to swooning. Sit you down, sir.

STRICKLAND.

I pray you, gentlemen, for these moments do not disturb me.

[Stands upon the hearth, erect, steady, and very still.]

HOPTON.

Truth, the man's made of stone. I thought he had loved poor Winwood as his own son.

GORING.

Quiet, will you?

[Removes his hat.]

HOPTON.

What——

GORING.

Think on what's happening in the courtyard, man!
[A moment's pause, and then from below, in the rainy courtyard, is heard the report of a muffled volley.]

HOPTON.

Hark!

STRICKLAND

(In an altered, remote voice).

Well done!

GORING.

Grant that he made a clean ending!

STRICKLAND

(Turns slowly, with eyes fixed before him, and the sudden smile of one who greets a friend).

Tom! Well done, Allison's lad!

[Pitches forward.]

GORING

(Catching STRICKLAND in his arms).

Sir William! Help here, Frank!

[They place STRICKLAND in his chair. GORING

starts to loosen his neck gear. HOPTON kneels and lays his hand on STRICKLAND'S heart. On the moment BOWYER comes swiftly into the room.

BOWYER.

Will! Will! The lad died gallantly. He went as if a strong arm were round him.

HOPTON

(Lets fall the hand that he has laid on STRICKLAND'S heart. Speaks in an awe-struck voice).

Perhaps there was!

GORING

(Rises erect from bending over STRICKLAND).

Captain! Sir William——

[BOWYER catches the note in GORING'S voice, and removes his hat, as he stands looking upon what he now knows to be the dead body of his friend and leader.]

CURTAIN.

THE HUNDREDTH TRICK

THE PEOPLE

CONNACHT O'CAHANE, known as Conn of the Hundred Tricks

ART O'CAHANE, his brother

ROBERT, LORD BORLASE, English deputy in Munster

HENRY STEWKLEY, his cousin and captain-lieutenant

THE PLACE

The Headquarters of Lord Borlase, before the Rock of Ballynore, in the Province of Munster

THE PERIOD

The latter years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth

THE HUNDREDTH TRICK

IN a dim, wainscoted parlor, at the head of the hall, in the manor house that has been converted to his military headquarters, LORD BORLASE, the English deputy, sits writing. The time is mid-evening of a chilly night in autumn. Upon the broad hearth (at stage left) a fire snaps, and on the chimneypiece and the heavy writing-table (at stage right) are lighted candles. At my Lord's elbow, on the table, stand a flagon of wine, with a goblet, and a gong. Beside them, in a little heap, lie the contents of a man's pockets—a small dagger, a purse, a rosary, several papers, and a little silver box, of curious workmanship, reversible, which contains two sorts of comfits.

My Lord is in his late thirties, an ashen blond, cold, brainy, imperious. He is dressed after the fashion of the time in rich fabrics, but with high boots and sword at side, like a soldier. For an instant he writes busily, and then, without looking up, he strikes the gong, and writes on.

A moment later HENRY STEWKLEY enters the room, by the heavy door (at center, back). He is a sanguine, thickset English soldier, of thirty or less. Obviously he has just come from service. He wears high boots, somewhat muddied, cuirass, helmet, and gauntlets, with his sword at side.

BORLASE

(Speaks without looking up or ceasing to write).

Fetch hither the prisoner!

STEWKLEY

(Saluting).

I shall, my lord.

BORLASE

(At the sound of a well-known voice starts and turns).

What! 'Tis never thou, my cousin Stewkley?

STEWKLEY.

The same, my lord.

BORLASE.

I had thought it the captain of the watch, in answer to my summons. So thou art returned from thy three day's scout. What fortune, Harry?

STEWKLEY

(Stands on the hearth, removing his gauntlets).

Our usual fortune, sir. These pestilent Irish savages will never stand to fight us in the open. We have wearied our horses and lost two men, and for our pains we have fetched in but a single prisoner.

BORLASE.

An officer?

STEWKLEY.

How else, sir? There are shorter ways with the common sort.

[Nonchalantly warms hands at fire.]

BORLASE.

And what's his rank?

STEWKLEY.

Naught but a beggarly young ensign.

BORLASE.

His name?

STEWKLEY.

Here in the shadow of Ballynmore they bear but one name.

BORLASE.

Another O'Cahane?

STEWKLEY.

Aye, one of the damned sept of the rebel O'Cahanes. Foreign-bred, to judge by his speech. I'd hang all such!

BORLASE

(Reflectively).

A young O'Cahane! Foreign-bred

STEWKLEY.

The devil's own luck is in it, my lord. Every O'Cahane in the four kingdoms we can clap hands on,

except the arch-mischiefmaker, Connacht O'Cahane, him that they call Conn of the Hundred Tricks.

BORLASE.

And well named! But the time is at hand, maybe, when he will need them, every one, even to his hundredth trick.

STEWKLEY.

You mean—— My lord! 'Tis never possible that——

BORLASE.

While thou wert ranging the hills, Harry, and netting this young sparrow of an ensign, we were hawking here for higher game.

STEWKLEY.

You've taken Connacht O'Cahane?

BORLASE.

Yesterday.

STEWKLEY.

St. George for England! My lord, you are master of Ballynora this hour.

BORLASE.

Not this hour, perchance, but soon shall be.

[Resumes his writing.]

STEWKLEY.

'Twas Connacht O'Cahane was the engineer of Ballynora yonder—Ballynora that has defied our arms these three months, thanks to the skill that he won in Spain!

BORLASE.

A Spanish mother and an Irish father! 'Tis a bad mixing of blood in Connacht O'Cahane.

STEWKLEY.

And you have him fast—he that shall teach us the hidden way to the Rock of Ballynora.

[*Crosses and halts at BORLASE'S elbow.*

My lord! One favor!

BORLASE.

Well, Harry?

STEWKLEY.

We've served you well, your lordship's own troop of horse. Grant us to be first into Ballynora!

BORLASE.

To say your prayers in Ballynora cathedral, Harry?

STEWKLEY.

(*With grim significance*).

To seek the cathedral, yes! The women will have sheltered there. We are but men, my lord! And for three months——

BORLASE.

Three months of siege! It shall not chance a second time. When these rebels see how it has sped with Ballynore—— Thou shalt have thy will, Hal Stewkley, thou and thy troopers. Now bid them fetch Connacht O'Cahane hither!

[STEWKLEY goes up and speaks an order out at the door. BORLASE rises and crosses to the hearth. STEWKLEY returns to the table.

STEWKLEY.

The Spanish trickster! What folly was on him to lay that shrewd head of his in the lion's mouth at last?

BORLASE.

He was fain to win in to Ballynore, now in its time of need. 'Tis dear to him as a son, that castle that his own skill fortified.

STEWKLEY.

Dear as a son, you say? Faith, 'tis all the son he's like to have now!

BORLASE.

Aye, if he keep his vows.

STEWKLEY.

It seems beyond belief that he, the soldier, should turn priest and Jesuit.

BORLASE.

Not a far turning, Harry! They be of the church militant, those Jesuit fathers.

STEWKLEY.

Aye, and of the church continent, by times. 'Tis young Art O'Cahane must be heir unto the chiefship now.

BORLASE.

So! The younger brother of Conn O'Cahane?

STEWKLEY.

Aye, the one brother that we left him when Lord Dudley sacked Dunbaily Castle.

[Takes up rosary from table.]

What's here? Your lordship has followed O'Cahane's practice and turned bedesman?

BORLASE.

'Tis the strippings of Conn O'Cahane's pockets.

STEWKLEY

(Taking up the silver box).

What's here? A comfit box! Pshaw!

[Throws it contemptuously aside.]

He has learned the womanish tricks of Italy. And papers——

BORLASE.

Of little moment. 'Tis not for nothing he is called Conn of the Hundred Tricks.

[Sits by fire.]

STEWKLEY

(Scanning papers).

A tavern score—a list of linen—a letter——

BORLASE.

Stay, Harry! Read me that letter once again.

STEWKLEY.

It seems naught. A schoolboy scrawl, no more!

BORLASE.

Read!

STEWKLEY

(Reading).

“Good my Brother:—Beseech you of your constant kindness send me twenty pistoles. To what purpose I may not say, save that I go upon a journey shall be to the credit of us both and the honor of our house, and henceforth I am done with all childish folly, and will endeavor to make you proud to name me,

“Your brother to serve you,

“Art O’Cahane.”

Dated at Salamanca, six months ago, my lord.

BORLASE.

That’s the young brother, eh? Sole kinsman and heir to Conn of the Hundred Tricks. What knowest thou of him, Harry?

STEWKLEY.

A young lad, little more than child. Bred up in Spain, by Conn O'Cahane's subtlety, to keep him from our hands.

BORLASE.

So much I know. A familiar letter! Perchance——
Dost think that O'Cahane bears affection to this lad?

STEWKLEY.

Affection? He—that flint!

BORLASE.

Still, his only heir—his brother. And the lad spoke of kindness. Foreign-bred, and young!

STEWKLEY

(Examining the dagger which he has taken from table).

My lord!

BORLASE.

Well, Hal?

STEWKLEY.

This is a pretty toy! If you have no need thereof——

[Starts to pocket dagger.

BORLASE.

Ha' done, Hal, thou ingrained ravager! 'Tis Conn O'Cahane's gear thou dost make free with.

STEWKLEY.

His gear—and he our prisoner? You are merry, sir.

BORLASE.

Nay, in grim earnest I speak. He shall have back those trifles, and more.

STEWKLEY.

You say?

BORLASE.

If he is wise, as his name augurs him to be, he will—— Hush!

STEWKLEY.

You mean——

BORLASE.

Away with that dagger! O'Cahane is here!

[STEWKLEY puts dagger aside as CONNACHT O'CAHANE enters the room. He is a tall, clean-run, soldierly man of BORLASE's own years, with a strong, somber face, that plainly shows his Spanish blood. He is untomsured, and wears the dress of a layman—hose and doublet of black, with high black boots, all somewhat shabbed. Very much master of himself and of the situation, he stands on the threshold, with eyelids half lowered, and passing over STEWKLEY, as a thing of naught, fronts BORLASE.]

BORLASE.

You have had four and twenty hours in which to be-think you, Colonel O'Cahane.

STEWKLEY

(With a sneer).

Father O'Cahane, perhaps, we should be saying now.

O'CAHANE.

You need not say it.

BORLASE.

Hold your peace, Stewkley! You are a wise man, Colonel O'Cahane.

O'CAHANE.

I have need to be now, my lord Borlase.

BORLASE.

Well said! Sit you down, Colonel.

[O'CAHANE sits by the table.]

And it may be, now, that the night that is passed has brought you counsel.

O'CAHANE.

I have slept well, my lord, I thank you. Seldom better. Under your favor!

[Takes up the comfit box and turns it, with seeming idleness, in his hand.]

[STEWKLEY makes a movement to prevent O'CAHANE, but pauses at a sign from BORLASE.]

BORLASE.

So you slept well, even in our straitest dungeon?

O'CAHANE

(Handling the comfit box).

At most times, my lord, I have at hand the means to sleep sound and long, when I may choose.

STEWKLEY.

Your hundredth trick?

O'CAHANE.

My nine and ninetieth.

[Opens and proffers the box.

A comfit, Captain Stewkley?

STEWKLEY

(Contemptuously).

No!

O'CAHANE

(Imperturbably reverses the box, and proffers the other side).

This other flavor, perhaps?

STEWKLEY.

Not for me!

[O'CAHANE reverses the box and eats from the side which he first has proffered.

You are fastidious in your choice of flavors.

O'CAHANE.

To every flavor, its hour!

STEWKLEY.

For those that follow Italian practices. I am not of that breed.

O'CAHANE.

Yet they might teach much, those Italians, even unto you.

STEWKLEY

(Angrily).

You mean that——

O'CAHANE.

Was it for these idle compliments you bade me hither, Lord Borlase?

BORLASE.

You know well why you are come here.

O'CAHANE.

Mere curiosity, my lord.

BORLASE.

For the last time, let me set forth the matter clearly. Mark me well—'tis for the last time!

O'CAHANE.

With all my heart I hope so, my lord Borlase.

BORLASE.

Yonder stands Ballynore—the fortress which we have besieged these three months.

O'CAHANE.

A siege from which some few of you will not go home, my lord!

STEWKLEY.

A curse upon him!

[For a breath of a second BORLASE'S eyes are on STEWKLEY, compelling him to silence. In that second O'CAHANE slips the comfit box inside his doublet, unnoted of his captors.]

BORLASE.

The season waxes cold. We may not sit here longer.

O'CAHANE.

Most wisely resolved, my lord—and unexpectedly.

BORLASE.

But we shall have Ballynore. Do not forget that! And there is now but one way by which we may take it.

O'CAHANE.

Then follow that way, my lord—aye, to the uttermost.

BORLASE.

There is a secret path into Ballynore—a path by which the fortress may be surprised.

O'CAHANE.

If you did but know that path, my lord!

STEWKLEY.

We have him by the heels that shall teach us that path.

BORLASE.

You were the engineer that built that fortress, Colonel O'Cahane. You know the hidden path.

O'CAHANE.

What then, my lord?

BORLASE.

You will show us that path.

O'CAHANE.

My lord is very merry.

STEWKLEY.

'Tis a jesting that you——

BORLASE.

Be silent! You will remember what we spoke on last night, Colonel. The Queen will give you a baronage for this service, and——

[O'CAHANE *rises*.

Where are you going?

O'CAHANE.

To breathe fresher air.

BORLASE

(*Rising*).

You leave this chamber for last night's dungeon.

O'CAHANE.

Still, fresher air!

BORLASE.

You do not know me, Conn O'Cahane.

O'CAHANE.

I know you well. At Dunbaily we met aforetime, and at Kilgowen—aye, and at other places.

BORLASE.

I will learn of you the way into Ballynore. If you will not sell it unto me——

STEWKLEY.

There are ways to force——

BORLASE.

He has said it, Conn O'Cahane.

O'CAHANE.

Then it's you that are not knowing me, Robert Borlase. Do you see this, and this?

[*Turns back the sleeves from his wrists.*]

Those are the scars I brought from the rack and the cord at Kilgowen, when you would be making me talk,

you Englishmen, and I was fain to be silent. I am no child that your talk of torture—no, nor your torture itself—will be frightening me.

[*Turns away to the table.*]

STEWKLEY

(*Crossing to BORLASE.*)

God's life! I'd be blithe to have the handling of him. I'd make him——

BORLASE.

You fool! He speaks the truth. He learned his strength there at Kilgowen—damn him!

O'CAHANE.

Well, my lord? 'Tis pity for your schemes, is it not so, that I am not a young lad and easy hurt?

BORLASE.

Young lad!

O'CAHANE.

In that case you might find it simpler to learn the way into Ballynora than you are like to find it now. I'll be drinking success to your siege, my lord Borlase!

[*Fills a goblet, at table.*]

BORLASE.

Harry! Your young ensign—O'Cahane—foreign-bred! Fetch him into the guard-room, just without.

STEWKLEY.

Why, sir, it is but a paltry——

BORLASE.

Go! And at my signal, lead him hither. Go!

[STEWKLEY goes out.]

O'CAHANE.

My lord Borlase!

[*With grave mockery drinks to him.*]

BORLASE.

So you have the laugh of me, Conn of the Hundred Tricks. Well they've named you! Without your help we are not like to win Ballynora. I wonder——

O'CAHANE.

Well, my lord?

BORLASE.

I wonder is there a way left untried by which we might persuade you. Tut, tut! I was but fancying. Well, get you forth unto your guards, O'Cahane!

O'CAHANE.

Your lordship's servant!

[*Bows low, and goes to door.*]

BORLASE

(*Watching O'CAHANE'S every movement sharply.*)

You have the laugh of us, Conn of the Hundred Tricks.

O'CAHANE

(Opens the door, starts to cross the threshold, and then, in the very act of passing forth into the guard-room, starts back, with a smothered cry).

God!

BORLASE.

What see you, Colonel?

O'CAHANE

(Turns on BORLASE a drawn and whitened face, but speaks steadily).

Naught.

BORLASE.

You cried aloud.

O'CAHANE.

The twinge of an old wound. It wrings me by times. Under your favor, let me rest here a moment.

[Leans against the chair by the hearth.

BORLASE.

Even as you will.

[Goes to table, takes papers and gives them to

O'CAHANE.

Here, have back your papers, Colonel. This letter—I judge this letter from a kinsman.

O'CAHANE.

Yes.

BORLASE.

Your brother, I take it?

O'CAHANE.

Yes.

BORLASE.

Where is this brother, by chance?

O'CAHANE.

In—Salamanca.

BORLASE.

A young lad, and easily hurt! 'Tis happy he is not in our hands this day, eh, Conn of the Hundred Tricks?

[With visible effort O'CAHANE pulls himself together and turns toward the door.]

Nay, go not, Colonel!

[Strikes gong on the table.]

A small matter, merely a stripling ensign of your Irishry, with whom I shall take order.

[STEWKLEY appears in the doorway.]

Bring him hither, Captain!

[STEWKLEY comes in, thrusting before him by one shoulder ART O'CAHANE. ART is piteously young—a slender, red-haired, brown-eyed boy of sixteen or less. He wears a shabbed and muddied military dress of brown leather and faded, dull red cloth.]

His right shirt sleeve is slit to the shoulder, and his right arm hangs limp and bandaged. His face is white, and his eyes have the dazed look of a man led from darkness into sudden light. For an instant no one speaks. Then ART'S dazed eyes, traversing the room, rest upon O'CAHANE. He springs toward him with a cry of relief wrung from his very heart.

ART.

Conn!

O'CAHANE

(Instantly).

And is that the way they school you young riders these days to be talking to your chief? Which one of them are you at all?

ART.

You—you——

O'CAHANE.

An O'Cahane ye are, by the look of you, but which one? Is it Rory Oge's boy you are, or Owen Ban's third son? Truth, I've never seen your face ere this day. I'm not remembering you.

BORLASE.

You've an ill memory, Colonel, for your own brother.

O'CAHANE.

My brother? Heaven save the man's wits! My brother, sir, is minding his book in Salamanca, where I placed him. He's not like to this young fool.

[*Under what he interprets as disownment ART staggers.*]

STEWKLEY.

Keep your feet, you whelp!

BORLASE.

So! What might they call you, Ensign?

ART.

Art O'Cahane.

BORLASE.

Art! An odd chance, is it not? Your brother's very name, O'Cahane.

O'CAHANE.

'Tis a common name amongst us, my lord Borlase.

BORLASE.

What say you, Ensign O'Cahane? Of what kindred of the O'Cahanes are you sprung?

STEWKLEY

(*After a moment's pause, striking ART*).

Speak up!

ART.

I—I—— You heard him! I'm no kin—to him.

BORLASE.

You do not speak in the country fashion. You were bred beyond seas.

ART.

Aye, my lord.

BORLASE.

You know the shrift we give to Spanish officers that serve amongst the Irishry?

ART.

No shrift at all, my lord.

BORLASE.

Well shot, for a young one! Take him, Captain.

STEWKLEY.

A file of muskets?

BORLASE.

For foreign officers? No! The Provost-marshal's gallows.

ART.

Gallows!

[At the boy's half-smothered exclamation O'CAHANE turns from the hearth, where he has been standing.]

BORLASE.

Unless Colonel O'Cahane will intercede for his—
clansman?

O'CAHANE.

I have naught to say—here.

BORLASE.

Then, Captain!

STEWKLEY

(Laying his hand on ART's shoulder).

At daybreak?

BORLASE.

No. This same hour.

ART.

This hour!

STEWKLEY.

Come!

[Unresisting, ART goes as STEWKLEY leads him toward the door, but all the while he keeps his eyes on O'CAHANE, and on the threshold, as if unable to bear more, he breaks from STEWKLEY and runs to O'CAHANE.]

ART.

But haven't ye one word now—now that it's to my death I'm going? 'Twas in the wrong I was to break your rules, but there came a wet wind with the spring

out of Ireland, and I must be where the swords were out. You're right not to be owning me, and me disobeying you, but now—now—won't you be giving me one kind word ere I take the long road? Only one word, Conn, my brother! My brother!

[*Clings to O'CAHANE.*]

BORLASE.

'Tis you of your family that have all the tricks, it seems, Conn O'Cahane.

O'CAHANE.

Forgive the lad for a fool! His mother was an Englishwoman.

ART.

Conn! Since 'tis to my death——

BORLASE.

I doubt if it be to your death now, Ensign O'Cahane.

ART.

Not—not to my death? My lord! You see, Conn!

BORLASE.

Take him, Captain!

O'CAHANE

(*Thrusting ART behind him*).

God's mercy, no!

BORLASE.

You are remembering Kilgowen and what happened there?

ART.

Kilgowen! They're meaning to—— Conn! Conn!
[*Collapses, a limp heap, on his knees, at*
O'CAHANE'S feet.

BORLASE.

He doesn't laugh at Kilgowen, you mark! A young lad, and already spent and wounded.

O'CAHANE.

It will do you no good—it will do you no good to be torturing him. He could not tell you the way to Ballynore.

BORLASE.

But you could!

O'CAHANE

(*As he comprehends, at last*).

Almighty God whom I serve—serve me!

BORLASE.

Be making your decision quickly, Conn of the Hundred Tricks. Captain!

STEWKLEY.

My lord!

BORLASE.

See that all——

[STEWKLEY *goes out.*

ART.

As they used you at Kilgowen! Conn! Conn!
[*Rises.*

You'll never be letting them!

O'CAHANE.

I will not give up Ballynora.

BORLASE.

We are clumsy, we English, beside you Spanish men, yet with care we can keep a man full seven days alive!

[ART *cowers against the wall, with a stifled cry.*

O'CAHANE.

Ballynora! Ballynora!

BORLASE.

O'Cahane! 'Tis but a young lad—and weak—and he is dear to you.

O'CAHANE.

There are younger than he, and weaker, there in Ballynora.

ART.

Conn! You'll let them——

O'CAHANE.

I cannot give up Ballynora.

BORLASE.

On your brother's body be it!

[*Striking gong.*]

They await you yonder, Ensign O'Cahane.

O'CAHANE.

You must go!

[*ART drags himself unsteadily toward door.*]

Ballynora! Ballynora!

[*STEWKLEY comes again into the room, and grips ART roughly by the arm that is wounded.*]

ART

(*With a cry of agony.*)

No! I can't! I can't! I can't! Conn! Not seven days—seven days in torment!

[*STEWKLEY suffers ART to break free. ART staggers to the hearth and falls across the chair, clinging to O'CAHANE'S hand.*]

Conn! Conn! Help me! Help me! Help me!

BORLASE.

You'll need your hundredth trick to do that, Colonel.

O'CAHANE

(*With terrible effort.*)

It's truth he says—you fool! Let go my hand!

ART

(Sinks back, fainting).

I—I—— Give me—to drink!

O'CAHANE.

I have your permission to give the lad a cup of wine?

BORLASE.

Hardly.

STEWKLEY.

The boy must be revived, my lord, before we can——

O'CAHANE.

May you win that mercy in hell—and may I win the grace to shrive you there!

BORLASE

(Filling goblet).

Here, then! And be swift. They await him yonder.

O'CAHANE.

I shall be swift, my lord.

[BORLASE and STEWKLEY, standing by the table, confer together. O'CAHANE, crossing to the hearth, draws the comfit box from within his doublet.]

ART.

It's shamed I am—to be disgracing you—but my arm—the wound is new, and he—— They'll be hurting it again!

O'CAHANE

(Drops a comfit into the goblet and waits for it to dissolve).

They'll not be hurting you, when once you've drunk this that I give you. You've no need to be fearing, Art, my brother!

ART

(Scarcely heeding the words, but feeling the unusual tenderness of the tone).

You're forgiving me, Conn?

O'CAHANE.

It's thinking I am how I brought you out from the burning of Dunbaily, you the only brother that was left me! And thinking I was too of Ballynore.

BORLASE.

Come, Colonel!

[STEWKLEY, *speaking again to BORLASE, detains him.*

O'CAHANE.

Drink it, Art! Don't be spilling it!

[Steadies ART'S hand upon the goblet.]

ART

(Drinks, and coughs).

'Tis bitter it is!

[Lets his head sink on his breast.

O'CAHANE.

Aye, it is bitter—the means of sleep that I bear always with me. 'Tis bitter—but not so bitter as seven days in hell. Art! Look up! Quick!

[In the voice of a priest.

Have you aught to confess, my son?

ART.

Confess? What do you——

[O'CAHANE signs the cross over ART.

Oh, I understand now! A quick passing—poison——

[Kneels, obedient to O'CAHANE'S gesture.

Oh, God bless you, Conn, my brother!

[Starts to cross himself, but in the movement lets his hand drop limply, and falls forward dead at the feet of O'CAHANE.

O'CAHANE

(Simultaneous with ART'S fall; in the full, deep voice of a priest).

Jesu! Maria! Receive his soul!

[At that voice STEWKLEY rushes forward, kneels, and raises ART'S head.

STEWKLEY.

What's this? You murderer! Your own brother!
You devil! What is this?

O'CAHANE

*(Erect and steady, but with the heavy voice of one
mortally outworn).*

My hundredth trick! Now, my lord Borlase, learn
your way into Ballynore!

CURTAIN

THE WEAKEST LINK

THE PEOPLE

ROBERT CHANDOS, Earl of Winchelsea

SIR WALTER LORING

SIR THOMAS WAYNFLETE

ROBIN DE TALMONT

THE PLACE

Beneath the walls of Pontivet, in Brittany

THE PERIOD

The Hundred Years' War

THE WEAKEST LINK

AT two o'clock in the morning, of the day on which the English forces shall deliver the assault on the doomed town of Pontivet, ROBERT CHANDOS, the English commander, lies sleeping in his quarters. The room is a cold and narrow chamber of stone, lighted with flambeaux set in iron rings along the walls, and by the fire upon the raised hearth of the vast, hooded fireplace (at stage left). At the far end of the room (stage back), gained by several steps and a narrow platform, is a three-fold window, through which are visible the night sky, with a few stars, and distant hills, blacker than the sky, which lie beneath it. The chamber is sparsely furnished, with a camp bed, a table, littered with papers, a stool or two, and a great chair, with a furred robe flung across it. Helmets, gauntlets, and pieces of armor lie ready at hand for service. A chill wind comes in at the open casement, and by times makes the flames of the flambeaux to flicker.

CHANDOS lies upon the camp bed (stage right), half dressed, with a coverlet flung across him. He is a man of forty odd, powerfully built and full-blooded, with a strong, clean-shaven jaw, and short dark hair, just touched with gray upon the temples.

SIR WALTER LORING, his kinsman and friend, a tall,

spare man of forty, sits at the table by the hearth. He wears jerkin and long hose of leather, as if prepared at any moment to put on his heavy body armor. He has papers spread before him, and he is explaining a plan of action to SIR THOMAS WAYNFLETE. The latter is a thickset, burly gentleman, in full armor, as typically Saxon English as CHANDOS and LORING are Norman.

The entire look of room and men is cold and warlike. The only note of color is in the dull red of the coverlet flung over CHANDOS—a note repeated in the furred robe that rests on the great chair, and in the color of the jupon that WAYNFLETE wears above his armor.

LORING.

Lo, here your post, hard by the Water Gate.
Westward at La Valette my lads lie wakeful.
Upon the east couch Bigod and De Courcy.

WAYNFLETE.

True captains all, and tried!

LORING.

Here Courtenay,
And here De Talmont with our Breton allies.

WAYNFLETE.

Good faith, a chain of iron rings the city!
And when we draw that chain, to-morrow daybreak,
There'll be a strangled throat for Pontivet.

LORING.

If the chain hold, the town is ours at sunrise.

WAYNFLETE

(Going to window).

The cursèd town that long has mocked our powers,
That shamed our arms, a score of years ago!
Sleep well, ye curs of France, in Pontivet!
We'll give ye a shrewd hunt's up with the dawn!
We'll lesson ye——

[CHANDOS stirs in his sleep.]

LORING.

Lower your voice, Sir Thomas!

WAYNFLETE.

What say you?

LORING.

Hush!

CHANDOS

(Murmuring in his sleep).

I shall win Pontivet!

WAYNFLETE.

'Tis——

LORING.

Quiet! Haply he will sleep again.

CHANDOS.

Idle thy cries! The town shall yet be mine.
Come daylight I shall enter Pontivet.

[*A moment's pause.*]

LORING.

So! Once again he sleeps.

WAYNFLETE

(*Coming from window*).

In truth, I wist not
My lord of Winchelsea lay in this chamber.

LORING.

Such was his will.

WAYNFLETE.

So spent he is and wounded,
In this day's hot assault upon the city——

LORING.

Aye, spent and wounded sore, yet for no urging
Would he forsake his post. This plan of action,
[*Indicates scroll.*]
He shaped it, point by point, ere he would rest him.
His thought has cared for all. And on the morrow——

WAYNFLETE.

He does not dream to mingle in the battle?

LORING.

What need? We are the limbs his brain doth order.
We smite as he directs.

WAYNFLETE.

Aye, marry, will we!

LORING.

And with the dawn, the first of English captains,
We bear him victor into Pontivet.

CHANDOS.

Dost hear? To Pontivet! To Pontivet!

WAYNFLETE.

Again he stirs!

LORING.

My blame! My words have roused him.

WAYNFLETE.

It stands him much upon to win this town.

LORING.

Aye, and small wonder!

WAYNFLETE.

Men have said, Sir Walter,
He suffered once a check beneath these walls.

LORING.

Men may say much.

CHANDOS.

Dost hear me, Isabeau?
Thy God is deaf. I enter Pontivet.

WAYNFLETE.

What said——

LORING

(Hastily).

And for that matter that men prate of,
'Tis sooth that near a score of years ago
Our lord of Winchelsea, then plain Rob Chandos,
A simple captain 'neath Prince Edward's banner,
Warred at the former siege of Pontivet.

WAYNFLETE.

The Black Prince failed.

LORING.

And Chandos was made captive.
A sorry check, and one he has remembered.

WAYNFLETE.

Small wonder, truth, he longs to take the town!

LORING.

God send him fair success! For much I doubt me,
If he fail now, his life were worth scant purchase.

WAYNFLETE.

If he fail now—why, man, ye prattle moonshine!
Our great Earl Winchelsea, our king's first captain,
Stout Robert Chandos, Rob o' Fifty Fights—
When hath he failed?

LORING.

He failed at Pontivet.

WAYNFLETE.

Drain ye a cup and comfort ye, Sir Walter!
This odd and even hour hath evil magic
To quench your courage.

LORING.

Grant it be that only!

WAYNFLETE.

Do but look hither on my lord's fair planning.
Mark how our line is drawn round Pontivet—
A double chain, here to shut out French succor,
Here to shut in the town. A chain of iron!
A chain so strong——

LORING.

No chain, howe'er ye forge it,
Is stronger than its weakest link.

WAYNFLETE.

Mere prattle!
Where is your weak link? All our captains trusty——

LORING.

Aye, true! But here the error of one horseboy——

WAYNFLETE.

Error? Where Robert Chandos is the captain?
All know him, swift with meed and swift to punish.

LORING.

Merciless, too!

WAYNFLETE.

Aye, none will dare to fail him.
We'll break our fast, come dawn, in Pontivet.

CHANDOS.

How should they hear thy crying, Isabeau?
White Hands! White Hands!

LORING.

Break off our speech!

WAYNFLETE.

Your pleasure?

LORING.

You have your orders. 'Gainst the morning, rest you.

WAYNFLETE.

Do you the like! And hark ye, Wat——

LORING.

Well, Thomas?

WAYNFLETE.

No more crazed whimsies touching weakest links!
So rest you well!

[WAYNFLETE goes out by a narrow door (stage
left first).]

LORING.

And you! Crazed whimsies, say you?

CHANDOS.

White Hands! White Hands!

LORING.

Send it be sick-room vapors,

And only that!

[Scanning the scroll.]

Where's the weak link? De Courcy,
Bigod, Tom Waynflete, Courtenay, De Talmont—
Tried captains all, sure men. That way all's answered!

[Goes to the window and looks forth.]

And yet—and yet——

[A moment's pause.]

CHANDOS.

We enter Pontivet!

[Wakes, rises on elbow.]

What is it? Walter! Ho, my cousin Loring!
Art sleeping, Wat?

LORING.

(Coming to CHANDOS).

'Tis you should sleep, my kinsman.

CHANDOS.

Sleep! Sleep! God's light! No sleep is for mine
eyelids,
Till ye have borne me into Pontivet.
What is the hour?

LORING.

Two o'clock, my cousin.

CHANDOS.

Two of the clock? Three hours—but three hours,
And Pontivet——

LORING.

We shall assault at dawn.

CHANDOS.

Wert looking forth?

LORING

Aye.

CHANDOS.

Saw you aught?

LORING.

All quiet!

No spark of warning beacon. They should kindle,
If aught should fall amiss, but—let me raise you!—
Lo! How the far horizon sleeps in blackness.
No beacon kindles. All is well.

CHANDOS.

All's well!

And yet—and yet a dreary dream was on me.
A word of evil echoed through my sleep.
The weakest link—pshaw! 'Tis a sick-bed fancy!
The chain I've linked round Pontivet is strong.

LORING.

Past breaking, sir.

[*Returns to table.*]

CHANDOS.

And so, come dawn to-morrow—
'Twas sworn of old I should not take the town.
Let me look on that scroll.

LORING

(*Giving him the scroll*).

You have it, kinsman.

CHANDOS.

So! So! De Courcy, Courtenay, De Talmont
Here at the ford upon La Roisselette.

LORING.

I do misdoubt that stream, La Roisselette.

CHANDOS.

Doubt it?

LORING.

Aye. Should the French find place of fording—

CHANDOS.

There's but one ford upon La Roisselette.
That ford we hold.

LORING.

But should there be another—

CHANDOS.

Man, man, I know that stream, La Roisselette!
One only ford there is, and well I learned it,
A score of years ago.

LORING.

Content ye, cousin!

CHANDOS.

'Tis by that ford ye cross to Beauséant,
The gray château. Aye, from the ford ye glimpse
 them,
The lights of Beauséant—twenty years ago!

LORING.

Let me lay by the scroll, and rest you, cousin.

CHANDOS.

Rest! Rest! I'll rest when I gain Pontivet.
A troublous dream it was! I cried out, cousin?

LORING.

A name you murmured.

CHANDOS.

What name?

LORING.

Isabeau.

CHANDOS.

Aye, truly! In my dream I looked upon her.
White Hands! White Hands! She dwelt at
Beauséant,
A score of years ago.

LORING.

At that time, kinsman,
You were some three years wedded.

CHANDOS.

Fairly wedded
Unto the wife that bore me only daughters.
She dwelt in England. I warred here in France.
And when the siege was laid to Pontivet,
I held the ford upon La Roisselette.
And from the ford—the lights of Beauséant—
They beacon through the night!

LORING.

Your task it was
To keep the ford.

CHANDOS.

But Beauséant was near—
And I was young! Her bower light was my beacon—
Her light at Beauséant! What harm came thereby?
No foeman crossed the ford, though I went ranging.
The ford was kept.

LORING.

And what of Isabeau?

CHANDOS.

So many years ago! And Beauséant,
'Tis now three parts a ruin. Well I marked it!
Was it a cloister, or some old man's hearthside
That quenched the fire in that heart of fire?
Good cousin, do you credit idle dreams?

LORING.

Wise men of old have done so.

CHANDOS.

For I saw her,
This hour, in my dreaming, Isabeau,
Even as I saw her, twenty years ago.
'Twas the last time. A tale had come from England.
She knew me wedded man. Ah, well! She cursed me.
"Never shall ye win Pontivet!" her burden.
"Never, while God remembers!" On the morrow
Our arms were put to shame. I was made prisoner.
'Twas thus I saw her in my dream but now.
Well, cousin?

LORING.

It is naught.

CHANDOS.

Aye, truth! Mere dreaming!
Yet should I fail to win me Pontivet,
It might be I should sink to idle brooding,

And—— What step's that? What tidings, Walter Loring?

[WAYNFLETE comes again eagerly into the room.]

WAYNFLETE.

My lord! Brave news, my lord! The stout Earl Brandon

This hour has joined our host!

CHANDOS.

What! Brandon, say you?

He was a day's march hence

WAYNFLETE.

He'd not be cheated,

He and his lads, of the good sport that's toward.

They're here at hand, a thousand fighting blades.

CHANDOS.

Good news, in truth! This makes assurance double.

I shall have Pontivet at morning light.

Eh, Wat? God does remember, it would seem—

Remembers well to fight beneath my banner!

LORING.

The fight is not yet fought out, kinsman Chandos!

[Goes to window and stands looking out.]

CHANDOS.

My greetings, Waynflete, bear unto Lord Brandon.

Let his men march beside Sir Walter's squadron.

Look to it!

WAYNFLETE.

Aye, my lord!

CHANDOS.

And good speed to you

Upon the morrow!

WAYNFLETE.

God you save, my lord!

[WAYNFLETE goes hastily from the room.]

CHANDOS.

Rightly you said! Dreams are mere woman's fancies.
Despite them all I shall win Pontivet.

Her God has not remembered. Do you mark me?

The chain I've forged is strong.

[*On the black horizon line, seen through the
window, a spark of light kindles.*]

LORING.

Ah!

CHANDOS.

Walter Loring!

What is it? Speak!

LORING.

Why, naught! Why, naught, it may be.

CHANDOS.

Answer me, man! I am no doddering woman.

Answer! You see——

LORING.

A beacon fire, my lord.

CHANDOS.

A beacon!

LORING.

'Twill be naught. Some fool has blundered.
Splendor of God! Another light breaks forth!

CHANDOS.

The danger signals!

LORING.

One upon another
They kindle! The horizon is ablaze.

CHANDOS.

Pitiful God! And I must lie here helpless.

[Outside is heard the faint noise of a camp rousing and taking arms.]

LORING.

The camp is stirring.

CHANDOS

(Struggling to rise).

Send me help, great God!

LORING.

Eastward there is the murmur of the battle.

CHANDOS

(Rising to his feet).

I will win Pontivet! Dost hear me, God?
Dost hear me, Isabeau?

LORING

(Hastening to CHANDOS).

My lord! My lord!

CHANDOS.

Stand from my way, Wat Loring!

[WAYNFLETE comes again hurriedly into the
room.

What's your tidings?

Out with it, man!

WAYNFLETE.

The French—relieving forces—
They've broken through our lines!

CHANDOS.

Ah!

WAYNFLETE.

They are pouring
Into the town! They're beating down our men!

CHANDOS.

Where's our line broken?

WAYNFLETE.

At La Roisselette.

CHANDOS.

The weakest link! I trusted to De Talmont.

LORING.

De Talmont's true! I'll stake my life upon him.

WAYNFLETE.

It may be, but his ensign is a traitor.

CHANDOS.

What say you?

WAYNFLETE.

'Twas his part to keep the ford.

He left his post, there at La Roisselette.

CHANDOS.

'Twas not well done.

WAYNFLETE.

And in that hour the Frenchmen
Crossed o'er the ford, and beating all before them
Burst into Pontivet, and hard upon them
More foes, and more, and more, and more come
swarming.

CHANDOS.

Let Brandon move upon La Roisselette.
Shift Courtenay unto the Water Gate.

Let Bigod smite the right wing of the French.
And swiftly! Swiftly!

LORING.

'Tis a desperate chance!

CHANDOS.

'Tis our one chance. The town is not yet lost.
About it, Waynflete!

WAYNFLETE.

Aye, my lord!

CHANDOS.

And, Waynflete!

WAYNFLETE.

My lord!

CHANDOS.

This treacherous ensign of De Talmont's——

WAYNFLETE.

He is without, under close guard, my lord.

CHANDOS.

Send him unto me.

WAYNFLETE.

Aye!

[WAYNFLETE *goes out.*]

LORING.

Best spare your strength.
Much hangs upon this hour.

CHANDOS

(Pacing up and down the chamber).

My hours are numbered.
If I lose Pontivet, my hours are numbered.
But to the last they'll find that I remember—
That I remember those that do betray me!
Where is this treacherous hound, De Talmont's ensign?

[ROBIN DE TALMONT *comes into the room.*

He is a clean-shaven, dark youth of nineteen, bareheaded, in military dress, powdered with dust, and unarmed. His face is bloodless with fright and pain. He has been cut upon the head, and from time to time, mechanically, stanches the bleeding with his sleeve.

LORING.

He's here, my lord!

CHANDOS

(In cold fury, his voice like a whip-lash, his eyes fire).

So! You are he? Come hither!
Hither, I say!

ROBIN.

My lord!

CHANDOS.

A light here, Loring!
A light! Dost mark me? I would look upon him—
He that forsook his post—he through whose treason
I have lost Pontivet!

*[Obediently LORING has lifted a candle from
the table, and holding it aloft, lets the light
fall across ROBIN'S white face.]*

ROBIN.

My lord!

CHANDOS.

You mark him!
The weakest link! In all the chain the weakest!
And you, so paltry, so contemptible,
An atom my left hand might brush aside—
'Tis you have strength to lose me Pontivet.
Answer! You left your post? You are not dumb!
You left your post?

ROBIN.

My lord!

CHANDOS.

Your answer!

ROBIN.

Aye!

But hear me, lord!

CHANDOS.

Enough! Write me his sentence,
Loring! This hour! Write!

[LORING *sits and writes at table.*

Upon the morrow
Let this same ensign—— How is it they call you?

LORING

(After a moment's pause).

Your name?

ROBIN.

(As if half dazed).

De Talmont, sir—— Robin de Talmont.

CHANDOS.

De Talmont's blest in such a valiant son!

ROBIN.

I am—no son of his. My mother's kinsman—
He let me bear his name—in charity.
He must not come to shame through me, my lord!
You will not shame De Talmont for my sake?
You will not——

CHANDOS.

Hold your peace. Upon the morrow
Lead this De Talmont forth before the army,
Aye, in the face of all the ranks assembled.
There let him be degraded from his office,

Flogged through the camp—aye, by the common hangman!

Then let him hang upon the provost's gallows,
Whereon camp-thieves are hanged.

LORING

(In protest).

My lord!

CHANDOS.

'Tis written,

Even as I bade?

LORING.

'Tis written.

CHANDOS.

I will sign.

[Goes to table, takes pen.]

LORING.

Kinsman! 'Tis but a young one. Of your pity
Grant him the mercy of mere death, my lord.

CHANDOS.

He has betrayed me.

[Signs the warrant.]

LORING.

And is he the first
That left La Roisselette to work betrayal?

CHANDOS.

You waste your words. He lost me Pontivet.

[To ROBIN.

Get you unto your guards! Dost hear me, sirrah?

ROBIN.

I am—to be—degraded?

CHANDOS.

You have heard

Your sentence given.

ROBIN.

I am—to be—flogged?

CHANDOS.

Get you away!

[*Paces up to window.*

LORING

You were best go, De Talmont!

[*As if in a daze, ROBIN goes to the door, then turns, and swiftly crosses to CHANDOS.*

ROBIN.

My lord! My lord! If you will only slay me!
Spare me the shaming—and the whip! My lord!
As you may hope for mercy—at your need!

LORING

(*Rising*).

Will you not hear him, my lord Winchelsea?

ROBIN.

I did my best—when that our line was broken—
When I came back—and found our line was broken—
All that I could, I did! I sought to perish—
There, in the fight! If you will only spare me
The open shame! It is not life I'm asking—
Only the shame! My lord! If you will spare me——

CHANDOS.

You left the ford.

ROBIN

For her sake 'twas I left it—
Only for her. Her message came this hour.
All the long day they'd sought me through the army.
All the long day she called—and I must seek her!

CHANDOS.

You left the ford and went unto your leman?

ROBIN.

My mother, dying—and she died this hour!

LORING.

Can you not grant the mercy that he seeks?

CHANDOS.

He lost me Pontivet.

ROBIN

(Falls on his knees beside LORING).

But you—you'll listen—
You'll make him listen! 'Twas so near—so near!
If my lord only knew how near the way!
Just from the ford upon La Roisselette
Unto the château yonder—Beauséant!

CHANDOS.

Beauséant!

ROBIN.

And her light—it was my beacon—
Her bower light—through the dark——

LORING.

Dost mark him well?

ROBIN.

My mother, dying there at Beauséant—
So near! So near!

LORING

(Watching CHANDOS).

His mother—Beauséant——

ROBIN.

If you will tell him 'twas for her I went—
Only for her!

CHANDOS

(Speaking with difficulty).

His mother—— Speak! Who was she?

LORING.

Your mother's name, lad?

ROBIN.

Isabeau d'Avranche—
Daughter of Messire d'Avranche.

CHANDOS.

Isabeau!

LORING.

You hear him, Chandos? And your father, lad?

ROBIN.

I—I—— Good faith, sir, he——

CHANDOS

(Like a man beside himself, he comes to the kneeling boy and catches him by the throat, turning him so that he may scan his face).

The truth! The truth!
Speak, ere I tear it from thee! Speak! Thy father!

ROBIN.

An English captain, sir. No name he left her
To give to me!

[Choking under CHANDOS's hold.
My lord!

LORING.

Have done, Rob Chandos!
Hast heard enough?

CHANDOS.

Now as God looks upon us,
I did not know this! This I did not know.
For this she cursed me, twenty years ago.

ROBIN.

Will my lord grant me mercy of quick death?
I had not wrought to lose him Pontivet,
But when she called me——

CHANDOS.

So! It was her hands
That drew him from the ford. Her dead, white hands
That thrust me from the walls of Pontivet.

[WAYNFLETE *comes again into the room.*
Well, Thomas Waynflete! So! The town is lost?

WAYNFLETE.

Aye, Pontivet is lost to us, my lord!
They found the weakest link within our chain.

CHANDOS.

The weakest link—the link of mine own forging!
God does remember well.

[*Sinks heavily into the great chair.*

That sentence, Walter,
Burn it! I may not judge——

LORING.

You're pardoned, Robin!
[*Thrusts the paper into the fire.*

CHANDOS.

Come hither, you—you lad!

ROBIN

(Going to CHANDOS).

My lord!

CHANDOS.

Your mother,

This night at Beauséant—what said she, dying?

ROBIN.

My lord! My lord! In truth she was distraught.
She knew not——

CHANDOS.

Answer truly!

ROBIN.

She was praying—
Madness it was!—she prayed the God of Justice
To hold you from the walls of Pontivet.

CHANDOS.

And God has heard!

[*His eyes close.*]

LORING.

My lord!

CHANDOS.

Peace! Peace! 'Tis answered,
Her prayer! I wonder will He hear thee praying,
Isabeau's son? Wilt kneel and pray for me?

ROBIN

(Kneeling beside CHANDOS).

I had not wrought to lose ye Pontivet,
Believe me, lord!

CHANDOS

(His hand on ROBIN's bent head).

The link of mine own forging—
The weakest link!

LORING.

Pray, Robin!

ROBIN.

Dominus,

Ad Te clamamus——

CHANDOS.

Ah!

*[With a rattling gasp he lets fall his head upon
his breast.]*

ROBIN

(Crying out sharply).

My lord! My lord!

LORING

(Bends over CHANDOS, touches his hand, and turns solemnly to WAYNFLETE).

Pray for his soul—who lost us Pontivet!

CURTAIN

THE SNARE AND THE FOWLER

THE PEOPLE

SIR HENRY CHAMPERNOUNE

YWAIN CHAUVIGNY

MICHAEL TAVERNIER

THE PLACE

A château not far from the coast, in Normandy.

THE PERIOD

The early days of the French Republic

THE SNARE AND THE FOWLER

A NARROW chamber in an old Norman château has been converted, in the wild days of the Nineties, into a prison cell. Bars are across the slits of windows (at stage right). The single door (at center, back) is fitted with a heavy lock. The furnishings—a cot (right), a table and a chair (at left)—are rude and battered. Yet on this evening some preparations of comfort have been made. In the narrow fireplace (at left) a low fire has been kindled. A loaf, a flask of wine, and some cheese have been set upon the table. On the chimneypiece a single, half-burned candle flickers.

The one occupant of the chamber, YWAIN CHAUVIGNY, is indifferent to these comforts. A slender, boyish figure, he lies wrapped in a tattered blanket upon the cot, well in shadow, and sleeps.

A moment, and the sound is heard of a key grating in the lock. MICHAEL TAVERNIER opens the door and comes into the room, with a candle in his hand. He is a scarred, brown man in his late twenties, in the worn uniform of a captain of the French Republic. He speaks over his shoulder, as he comes.

TAVERNIER.

This way, Sir Henry!

[SIR HENRY CHAMPERNOUNE follows TAVERNIER into the chamber. He is a dark man

of thirty, in whom the outer semblance of a blasé, semi-eccentric man of the world scarcely serves to mask the almost fanatic nature beneath. He wears riding dress, slightly crumpled and disarranged, and his own hair, unpowdered.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

At your service, Captain!

TAVERNIER.

Rough lodgings, but the best that I could win you.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

It matters little. Not for long I rest here.

To-morrow morn at six—such was the sentence!

Egad! She makes short work, your red republic—

[Takes snuff.]

Short work, that leaves me by a head the shorter!

TAVERNIER

(Placing the candle on the table).

There's bread and wine I bade them set before you.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Good husbandry to fatten what you slaughter!

TAVERNIER.

'Tis my regret that you must share this chamber.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Ah, well! To other matters that's a trifle.

TAVERNIER.

But this young fellow here——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

A doomed man also?

TAVERNIER.

Yes. 'Tis a Breton lad, Ywain Chauvigny,
A young spy, captured in the Vaupré region.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

As much a spy as, say, your humble servant?
Poor devil!

TAVERNIER.

A young fool! You scarce would believe it,
But yestermorn he tried to make evasion.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Give you the slip, eh? Tut, tut, tut! How foolish!

TAVERNIER.

Aye, so he found it, with a shattered kneepan.
And for that wound I was half loath to move him.
But if you grudge that he should rest here, Harry——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Nay, let him bide! We shall not vex each other.

*[Goes to the cot and stands looking down at
YWAIN.]*

He sleeps, eh? On my conscience, 'tis a young one!

She has few qualms of pity, your republic.
 This is a lad should win no worse than beating.
 Cuff him and send him home unto his mother!

TAVERNIER.

And is it so in your just England, Harry,
 Your wise and gentle law deals with young poachers
 That trap a hare, say, in his lordship's manors?
 Here in our France——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I'm desolate, dear Michael,
 But since I die at six o'clock to-morrow,
 We scarce can end this ancient argument.
 Then why embark?

TAVERNIER.

But yet of France and England——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Enough for me that France, the red, victorious,
 Takes off my head. And slow and sober England
 In her good time will have a reckoning for it.
 I am no spy. I came on mine own errand.
 Your pardon, Michael. I speak over warmly.
 But to be frank, I am annoyed, good Michael,
 Wondrous annoyed at parting with this headpiece,
 That for nigh thirty years has served me well.

TAVERNIER.

You're the same Harry of our wretched schooldays.
 You would be jesting, even there at Bromwich.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

That cursèd school! Why did you mind me of it?
 On my last night I'd think of something gayer.
 How swift all crowds to memory at the naming!
 We sniveling, half-fed brats in outworn garments,
 Shabbily genteel, with our empty stomachs;
 The slavish ushers, and the brutal master—
 How we would cringe to look upon his ferule!
 That was fine breeding for my father's son—
 The eldest son of Roland Champernounge!
 Why did you mind me of those wretched schooldays—
 The days that seared like iron to my soul—
 The days that warped me from the man God meant me!

TAVERNIER.

My faith, this night I thought upon a youngster,
 Half French by birth, that stumbled in your language,
 Wretched and homesick, exiled into Bromwich.
 And there he found a certain English Harry
 That stood his friend——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

You were a piteous young one!

TAVERNIER.

And fought his fights, and cheered him.
 I've not forgotten, Harry!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Nonsense, Michael!

TAVERNIER.

'Tis a shrewd turn I should be here on duty—
Should head the guard that, on to-morrow morning——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Chances of war, friend Michael! Luck go with you!
And from my heart my thanks for your kind usage.

TAVERNIER.

Good night to you! And take my counsel, Harry!
Eat of this food.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I am not hungry.

TAVERNIER.

Nonsense!

Eat, and ere midnight, when the guard is shifted.
Good night!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Good night! Ah, Michael!

TAVERNIER.

Yes.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

One service!

This letter, could you send it as 'tis addressed?
Nay, 'tis no trick, no more than private business,
Writ to mine agent, over seas in London,
Bids him deliver certain sums of money.

TAVERNIER.

To whom?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

A certain man.

TAVERNIER.

Deal plainly with me.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

A certain man has rendered me—a service,
Here in your France—aye, served me to my liking!
I would requite him, even as I promised.

TAVERNIER.

What service? Harry, come! You must speak
plainly.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

To you, then! On your honor, you'll be silent?

TAVFRNIER

My hand upon it. Well?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I know not, Michael.

'Tis a long tale, and little time is left us.

There was a woman—man, it was my mother,
No longer young, and proud, and in a dotage
She saw and loved that handsome rake, my father,
Sir Roland Champernoune, the worst in England.

110 THE SNARE AND THE FOWLER

He wedded her, and with full hands he scattered
The fortune that she brought. Among his harlots
He wasted it, and mocked her.

TAVERNIER.

Miserable!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Then one there was, a painted, brazen madam,
By nation French, by nature demi-devil,
And she ensnared him, warier than the others.
Higher she aimed, would have no less than marriage.
And for her sake—you hear me, man?—my mother
Was thrust from her due place, her marriage voided,
And I, a five years' child, declared a bastard.

TAVERNIER.

My poor friend!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

True, as God looks on us, Michael!
But 'twas a woman of great heart, my mother,
My gray old mother! Faith, she never yielded.
Year after year she fought the case through law courts,
Laughed at, derided, mocked, but never vanquished—
And while we fought, we starved, I and my mother!
Starved, and held on—held on——

TAVERNIER

You English Harry!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I starved at Bromwich, but I lived in plenty
Beside the way she fared, my brave old mother!
All in her rusty black I mind her, Michael,
Her grim, gray face that never smiled upon me.
In all her life but once I saw her smiling.

TAVERNIER.

That was——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

The day on which the suit was ended,
And judgment given at last, and in our favor.
The name of Champernounge was mine—the fortune—
And when she knew, she smiled, my gray old mother,
She smiled—and died. Long since her heart was
broken,
But she had lived until her work was ended.

TAVERNIER.

Your English mothers—and you English men!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

He had died drunken years before, my father,
But there remained the painted jade his mistress,
And there remained the brats that she had brought him,
Three bastard brats that had been softly nourished,
The while my mother starved.

TAVERNIER.

And what then, Harry?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Justice—aye, justice! For each bitter hour
 My mother bore—for every groan wrung from her—
 I would have groans from them, in equal measure—
 From her, the harlot, and her nameless children!

TAVERNIER.

And you're the Harry that we thought a jester,
 A merry, careless lad in Bromwich schooldays.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Jester? Egad! It's been a bitter jesting,
 As more than one have found. For I had money,
 Now I was Champernounge, and money, mark you,
 'Twill buy most things. And vengeance for my mother
 It will buy too. As for the woman, lately
 She died, the mistress of a blackleg captain.
 'Tis said he used to beat her. It is likely.
 She had grown foul of face. As for her eldest,
 He died, half-drunken, in a tavern riot.
 The second, a young ruffian from whose horse-heels—
 (I mind me well!)—the mud splashed o'er my mother
 And made him laugh, one day I'd not forgotten,
 He pined and died within a debtors' prison.

TAVERNIER.

And had you any part therein, Sir Henry?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

When fruit is ripe to fall, if a chance passer
 Should shake the bough—what harm?

TAVERNIER.

Your third half-brother?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

No brother, sir, of mine.

TAVERNIER.

Your father's son, though.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Name him no brother! 'Twas that woman's offspring.
Her third son, Owen—faith, he lacks a surname!
A long-limbed youth of sixteen—eighteen summers,
He should be now. I have no need to see him.
That woman's son he is. Well, lately, Michael,
I heard he dwelt in France, among her kindred.
Now there's a certain man——

TAVERNIER

(Indicating the letter).

The one here mentioned?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

A skilful helper on of fates predestined!
I pledged him a round sum. He chose his methods.
Nothing I know thereof, nor care to know.
A week ago he sent the word I waited—
Unto this coast I came, solely to hear it:
The harlot's sons will soon be met together,
In hell, 'tis like, and so my work is ended!

TAVERNIER

(In frank horror).

Sir Henry Champernoune!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

You have my story.
Now will you speed that letter, as you promised?

TAVERNIER.

Blood money, is it, to your paid assassin?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

There are so many of that trade, good Captain,
In your fair France! Take it or leave it, Michael!
You are no judge to sit in judgment on me.
You saw not the long years my mother suffered.

TAVERNIER.

And for her sake you've snared them, your half-
brothers.

'Twas not well done, my Harry, and you know it.
A dangerous game! It haps sometimes the fowler
Is meshed in his own snare. Give up such practice
Henceforth, old friend!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Henceforth? A word I'm done with!
To-morrow morn—— Ah, well! Had I not
hankered
To know him sped, this Owen, I'd not ventured

Into your France. The snare you speak of, Michael.
Has closed on me already, to your liking.
Are you content?

TAVERNIER.

I'm sorry!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

For to-morrow?

I'm sorry too! My head upon my shoulders
I like far better than placed elsewhere.

TAVERNIER.

Old jester still, though now your jests are bitter—
Bitter as death! Well, I will send your letter.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I thank you, Michael!

TAVERNIER.

And once more——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Well, say it!

TAVERNIER.

Nothing! Sleep well! Yet ere you sleep, my Harry,
Best eat! 'Twill hearten you against to-morrow.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Well, well, I'd venture more to please you, Michael!
And so good night!

TAVERNIER.

Good night to you, friend Harry!
[TAVERNIER goes out.]

CHAMPERNOUNE.

It is a long good night indeed, I take it!
Ah, well! 'Tis a droll ending to the journey!
[Takes snuff.]

To-morrow morn at six——

[YWAIN, roused by the sound of TAVERNIER'S exit, has sat up slowly on the cot. He is a lad of fifteen or sixteen, small for his age and slight, with fair hair and a sensitive face. He wears the dress of a peasant, full breeches, short jacket, and a loose, white shirt. His left knee is roughly swathed in bloodstained bandages.]

YWAIN

(In blank surprise, as he sees CHAMPERNOUNE).

M'sieu!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Well, comrade?

YWAIN.

But you—but you—you were not here aforetime.
When I lay down to sleep the room was empty.

CHAMPERNOUNE

(Throughout with light and kindly raillery).

I grieve that any way my presence irks you.
My coming here—'twas not of my desire.

YWAIN.

Then you—you too, you are a prisoner, m'sieu?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

A most sagacious lad! You've hit it, brother!

YWAIN.

And come to-morrow morn, you too——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Precisely!

YWAIN.

Ah, I am glad!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

You scarce are complimentary.

YWAIN.

Ah, m'sieu, if you would but hear my meaning.
I said it stupidly. My head's so tired.
What I did aim at—'tis so lonely, mark you—
Lonely to lie here, counting the slow hours,
And knowing that, come six to-morrow morning——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

You poor young devil!

YWAIN.

Pray you, do not pity,
Or I may cry, and you may think me—frightened.
I am not frightened, truly, but 'tis—tedious
Here, the slow hours—and to-morrow sunrise—
There in the tumbril, you'll be there beside me?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

'Tis likely! Miracles are out of fashion.
You may rest easy. I'll be with you, comrade!
My hand upon it!

YWAIN.

When you speak so hearty,
My faith, it does not seem so hard, this dying!
And you will stand beside me in the tumbril?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

If 'tis permitted me.

YWAIN.

And will you promise,
If 'tis not far too great a thing I'm asking,
That in the tumbril, if you see me falter,
And turning white—it well may be, you see, sir,
For this smashed knee o' mine, it aches and twinges.
I have been near to crying out, odd minutes.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Poor little chap! No, no! I did not pity.
Go on!

YWAIN.

Why, if you chance to see me paling,
To-morrow morn, will you but look upon me,
Hearty and kind, as you were saying: Comrade!
I shall stand steadier then.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I will remember.

YWAIN.

For it were hard, sir, there, at the last moment,
To see no look of kindness.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Fear not, comrade!

YWAIN.

I thank you, m'sieu. And—and one thing tell me!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

A dozen, if I can!

YWAIN.

Will it hurt greatly?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Eh, brother?

YWAIN.

Hurt. The knife, I mean—the knife, sir.
I am not frightened, no. But will it hurt—much?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Dear God! He is too young. You might have pity.

YWAIN.

Well, m'sieu?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

'Twill not be for long, my comrade!
A moment, and thereafter, a great quiet—
And peace, and stillness.

YWAIN.

But that moment, m'sieu?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I shall be close beside you. They shall grant that.
And I will help you all I can. Dost hear me?

YWAIN.

Yes, m'sieu, yes! And if you think me—crying—
'Tis only that the ache, here in my kneecap——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Aye, surely! Well I know you are not frightened.
Now think no more of what must be to-morrow.
Nor speak thereof.

YWAIN.

will not, sir, I promise.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Canst sleep again?

YWAIN.

No, m'sieu, I am sorry.

But in my brain, 'tis like the bees a-buzzing.

One thought comes swarming, and another after—

And then another—— No, I cannot sleep, sir.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Why, then you best had eat.

YWAIN.

I am not hungered.

CHAMPERNOUNE

(Takes food and wine from table and gives to YWAIN).

Come, come! You'll be the better for it, comrade.

Look you, I'm fain to eat. You must share with me.

Here, drink you this! That's my good lad! Come!

Drink it!

YWAIN.

You are right kind! And 'tis good wine is this, sir.

They use you better far than they have used me.

Must I eat this?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Try, lad! You'll feel the better.

YWAIN.

Against to-morrow!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Speak not of to-morrow.
 Speak of aught else. Tell me what chance has brought
 you
 To such a pass.

[Sits by fire.]

YWAIN.

scarce can tell you, m'sieu.
 'Twas all so strange and swift. I have a kinsman.
 He dwells in England. You are English, m'sieu?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

In truth.

YWAIN.

I'm glad. For I am English also.

CHAMPERNOUNE

I scarce had guessed it.

YWAIN.

Yet in truth I'm English,
 In England born, and bred there in my childhood.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Your childhood? Pitying saints! It is not ended.

YWAIN.

But she had little love for me, my mother.
 Her love was all for them, my elder brothers.
 So when my father died and things went crosswise—

Look you, I cannot tell you all the wherefores—
 I was so young—but I was an encumbrance.
 And so they packed me into France, and here, sir,
 I have not been too happy.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

'Tis hard measure
 A child should go unhappy. I remember
 How hard that measure. I remember Bromwich.
 Well, lad?

YWAIN.

And here at first I dwelt with kindred.
 Cousins they were, and kind, in distant fashion,
 So long as money came for my maintaining.
 But long since it has ceased, and so—'twas fair, sir,
 I should turn to and do my share of labor.
 If I'd not worked so hard, I'd 'a' grown taller.
 Do you not think so, sir?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

It may be.

YWAIN.

Look you!

I was so fain to grow to be a tall man,
 Like to my father and my eldest brother.
 I should have liked full well to be a soldier.
 In England, see you, they are gentle people,
 My father's people. Aye, sir, I am eating,
 Although I talk.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I see you are, my brother!

YWAIN.

"My brother!" Truth, I like to hear you say it,
Lightly, that way. I wonder do you know him,
My real, own brother, since you too are English?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

'Tis a wide land, is England.

YWAIN.

Yet my brother,
You well might know his name, perchance have seen
him.
He's a great gentleman, and a good soldier,
So all men say.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Well, what's his name, your brother?

YWAIN.

Sir Henry Champernounge of Slayne in Surrey.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Sir Henry——

[Rises, and hastily pours himself a cup of wine.]

YWAIN.

M'sieu! What is wrong? I pray you!

CHAMPERNOUNE

(Thickly).

Naught but my fancy—that I'll taste this wine, too.

[Drinks.

A good draught, yes! What were you saying, comrade?

YWAIN.

"Brother," you said before.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Well, then—my brother,
What name was it you said? I heard not clearly.

YWAIN.

Sir Henry Champernounge of Slayne in Surrey.
My brother's name, of whom we spoke aforetime.

CHAMPERNOUNE

(After a moment's blank silence).

But 'tis not possible. Your name—he said it,
The Captain here. You're Ywain—and Chauvigny.
You're never Champernounge.

YWAIN.

Not here in France, sir.
My cousin's name I bear, old Jehan Chauvigny,
And Ywain they have made my name. But Owen
I was baptized, sir, yonder, there in England,
And Champernounge of Slayne, he was my father.

CHAMPERNOUNE

(Turning away to the hearth).

Ah, yes! I see—afar! I am a jester.
 So Michael said. But now methinks a greater
 And grimmer Jester makes of me his plaything.

YWAIN

And so you do not know my brother Harry?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Egad! I have my doubts if e'er I knew him.
 Yet I made sure.

[Turns to YWAIN.

But unto you what is he,
 This eldest brother? You have never seen him.

YWAIN.

Ah, but I have.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

What!

YWAIN.

There at Slayne in Surrey,
 The gaunt old house, there was his portrait hanging,
 In a dim chamber, and a serving woman,
 Long time at Slayne, she told me 'twas my brother—
 My eldest brother, little Master Harry.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

That would be poor old Dorothy, God rest her!
 That nursed me in her arms.

YWAIN.

And I was lonely,
 There at cold Slayne, and he too, he was lonely,
 Hanging all day, there in the dust and cobwebs.
 So I would go and play beneath his portrait,
 And sometimes from his frame he'd smile upon me,
 And sometimes he'd come down and be my playmate.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Owen! You're daft!

YWAIN.

Yes, he, my brother Harry,
 He used to come—— No, no! I am but talking.
 I was so little, sir, and very lonely.
 I fancied it, no doubt. 'Tis very childish,
 Such strange things come to mind, now I am dying,
 Or very soon to die. But he, my brother,
 He grew so dear to me. 'Twas my half-brother,
 In truth, sir.

CHAMPERNOUNE

Ah! You do admit as much, then?

YWAIN.

But we were of one father. And this Harry,
 He seemed to me far nearer than the others,
 My full-blood brothers, that were rough and mocked
 me.

I knew he would be different from those others.
 I knew we should be friends, if I might find him.
 So when he wrote——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

He wrote?

YWAIN.

Such a kind letter!

And sent by a sure hand.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

The man that brought it?

YWAIN.

A keen, tall fellow, with black hair. A white scar
Here on his cheek

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Go on! Full well I know him.

YWAIN.

My brother prayed me come to him in England,
My brother Harry, and he sent me money.
I was to go to him. Think on it, m'sieu!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I'm hearing all your words.

YWAIN.

And there were papers
That I should bear to him.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

The snare! I see it.

YWAIN.

But of a truth there must have been foul dealing,
For I was stopped, a little on my journey.
They stopped and searched me, and those papers,
m'sieu——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Dear God! I did not know he was so little.

YWAIN.

They said they showed I was a spy for England.
But I'm no spy. I only went to seek him—
My brother that had bidden me unto him.
Such a kind letter! I would show it to you.
I'd fain have kept it, but they took it from me.
Perchance they held that even that was treason.
My brother's letter! O my brother Harry!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I doubt if God rejoice in me this hour.

YWAIN.

Think you 'twill be a bitter loss to him,
The papers they took from me? I'd be sorry
That he had any harm through me, my brother.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

God's word, have done! I cannot bear this talking.

YWAIN.

M'sieu!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

There, there! I meant naught. Eat, but quiet!
I'm weary—cannot talk. Your pardon, comrade!
Nor can I listen. Ah, just God of justice!
What have I done that set the snare that took him?

YWAIN

(While he watches CHAMPERNOUNE, puzzled and anxious, he has crumbled his bread in his hands, and he now finds in it a key).

Ah! What is here? M'sieu! I pray you!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Well, lad?

YWAIN.

Hush! What is here?

CHAMPERNOUNE

(Going to YWAIN).

A key! Whence came it, Owen?

YWAIN.

Here in the loaf.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

A scroll is wrapped around it.

Patiently! So!

YWAIN.

What is it? Ah! What is it?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

This sure was done with your conniving, Michael!
God's blessing on ye! Life! Until this moment
I had not known the face of death was dreadful.

YWAIN.

What is it, m'sieu? Won't you tell me, m'sieu?

CHAMPERNOUNE

'Tis life!

YWAIN.

Life!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

You'll go with me unto England,
And we will find him that you seek, your brother.

YWAIN.

M'sieu!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

And he'll be good to you, I promise!

YWAIN.

But how shall we make shift——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

A key is sent us.
This will unlock the door upon the lobby.
The guard is bribed that keeps the watch till mid-
night.
We may pass down the lobby——

YWAIN.

Ah, but wait, sir!

There is the wall to scale, the drop beyond it
Into the ditch.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

A trifle, lad, a trifle,
When a man's life doth hang upon the service.
Then but a mile——

YWAIN.

A mile!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Across the country,

And there a horse awaits us. Faith, 'tis simple!
Now quickly, for the hour draws near to midnight.
We've little time to waste. Up with you, Owen!

YWAIN.

I cannot, m'sieu.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

What! Affrighted, are you—
You that have called yourself a Champernoune!
Come, child! 'Tis simple.

YWAIN.

Simple, do you call it?

For you, perchance. I have a broken kneecap.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

God's death! I had forgotten.

YWAIN.

There's the wall,
And the wide ditch, and then that mile of walking.
Why must my knee be broken? I can't do it.
I can't! I can't! I can't! O God of pity!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Stand up! We'll try!

[Raises YWAIN to his feet.]

YWAIN.

M'sieu! The room is whirling.
The pain! Ah, let me be!

[Sinks half fainting on cot.]

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I cannot take him.

[Goes to hearth.]

And life waits yonder—and the plan is simple—
Only a wall, a ditch, a mile to cover!
Life waits me there, and years I have gone starving.

YWAIN.

M'sieu!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Well! Well!

YWAIN.

The time draws near to midnight.
You should be gone.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Be still!

YWAIN.

You're fit to travel.

Well, then!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

No, no! God's mercy! Do not tempt me!

YWAIN.

What should you else? I'm nothing to you, m'sieu.
Why should you stay? No child am I to need you.
And they are brave, the Champernounes, my fathers!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

And yonder—life—for which I have gone starving!

YWAIN.

So do you go. And as you say, to-morrow
'Twill be but a brief moment. Go, I pray you!
I am not frightened.

CHAMPERNOUNE

(Going to the door).

Now may God forgive me!

[Unlocks door.]

YWAIN.

And so good night, m'sieu! And there in England,
If you should see him—him—my brother Harry——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I cannot stay to hear you out, my comrade.
Good-by!

[CHAMPERNOUNE *goes out.*

YWAIN.

Good-by! He might have said: "My brother!"
For the last time, he might have said: "My brother!"
And now at dawn to-morrow in the tumbril—
O pitying Christ! It will be very lonely.

[YWAIN *drops down on the cot, with his face hidden. CHAMPERNOUNE comes again quietly, with bent head, into the room. He pauses by the cot, and after a moment, as if sensing his presence, YWAIN lifts his head.*

But you—m'sieu, you are come back again?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I am come back.

YWAIN.

You had—forgotten somewhat?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

I had forgotten much were best remembered.

YWAIN.

The time is very short.

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Aye, short, my brother!

YWAIN.

Oh, pray you—pray you! Go! This makes it harder.
 Oh, pray you, go, while I can say: God speed ye!
 Oh, go! go! go!

[Sinks down, sobbing heavily, on cot.]

CHAMPERNOUNE

(Bending over YWAIN).

Owen! My little brother!
 Don't! Don't cry so! Listen! I shall not leave you.

YWAIN.

I will not hold you back—indeed I will not!
 But oh! you've made it cruel hard to me!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Aye, cruel hard I've made it to you, Owen,
 And cruel hardness I must suffer for it,
 Here in this hour—and perchance hereafter.

YWAIN.

But go! But go!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Fain would I, but I dare not,
 Lest He say: Champernounge, where is thy brother?

YWAIN

(Looking up).

Lest He say: Champernoune——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

'Tis my name, Owen,
Sir Henry Champernoune.

YWAIN.

My brother Harry?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Aye.

YWAIN

(Clinging to him).

You? Oh, let me look at you more nearly!
Don't turn from me! Oh, did you come to seek me?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Aye, for your sake it was I made this journey.

YWAIN.

Harry! And so through me you'll die to-morrow!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

And so through mine own act——

*[In the lobby without is audible the muffled
tread of feet.]*

YWAIN.

You hear? The footsteps—
The clank of arms!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

It is the guard is shifting.

YWAIN.

Midnight?

CHAMPERNOUNE.

In faith!

YWAIN.

Your chance! Your chance! You've lost it!

CHAMPERNOUNE.

The fowler in his snare!

YWAIN.

And on the morrow——

CHAMPERNOUNE.

[Standing by the cot, with his arm about

YWAIN, who is half kneeling.

Upon the morrow I shall be beside you,
As I have earned to be. Nay, courage, Owen!
Only a moment——

YWAIN

(Lifting a face full of trust).

And then peace and stillness,
You said!

*[His head sinks against CHAMPERNOUNE'S
breast.*

CHAMPERNOUNE.

Aye, peace—such as I know this hour!

CURTAIN

THE CAPTAIN OF THE GATE

THE PEOPLE

HUGH TALBOT
JOHN TALBOT
DICK FENTON
MYLES BUTLER
PHELMY DRISCOLL
KIT NEWCOMBE

THE PLACE

The Gatehouse of the Bridge of Cashala, in the Province of Connaught

THE PERIOD

The Cromwellian invasion of Ireland

THE CAPTAIN OF THE GATE

*I*N the cheerless hour before the dawn of a wet spring morning five gentlemen-troopers of the broken Royalist army, fagged and outworn with three long days of siege, are holding, with what strength and courage are left them, the Gatehouse of the Bridge of Cashala, which is the key to the road that leads into Connaught. The upper chamber of the Gatehouse, in which they make their stand, is a narrow, dim-lit apartment, built of stone. At one side (stage left) is a small fireplace, and beside it a narrow, barred door, which leads to the stairhead. At the end of the room (center, back) gained by a single raised step, are three slit-like windows, breast-high, designed, as now used, for defense in time of war. The room is meagerly furnished, with a table (stage right) on which are powder flask, touch box, etc., for charging guns, a stool or two, and an open keg of powder. The whole look of the place, bare and martial, but depressed, bespeaks a losing fight. On the hearth the ashes of a fire are white, and on the chimneypiece a brace of candles are guttering out.

The five men who hold the Gatehouse wear much soiled and torn military dress. They are pale, powder-begrimed, sunken-eyed, with every mark of weariness of body and soul. Their leader, JOHN TALBOT, is

standing at one of the shot-windows, with piece presented, looking forth. He is in his mid-twenties, of Norman-Irish blood, and distinctly of a finer, more nervous type than his companions. He has been wounded, and bears his left hand wrapped in a bloody rag. DICK FENTON, a typical, careless young English swashbuckler, sits by the table, charging a musket, and singing beneath his breath as he does so. He, too, has been wounded, and bears a bandage about his knee. Upon the floor (at right) KIT NEWCOMBE lies in the sleep of utter exhaustion. He is an English lad, in his teens, a mere tired, haggard child, with his head rudely bandaged. On a stool by the hearth sits MYLES BUTLER, a man of JOHN TALBOT'S own years, but of a slower, heavier, almost sullen type. Beside him kneels PHELIMY DRISCOLL, a nervous, dark Irish lad, of one and twenty. He is resting his injured arm across BUTLER'S knee, and BUTLER is roughly bandaging the hurt.

For a moment there is a weary, heavy silence, in which the words of the song which FENTON sings are audible. It is the doleful old strain of "the hanging-tune."

FENTON

(Singing).

"Fortune, my foe, why dost thou frown on me,
And will thy favors never greater be?
Wilt thou, I say, forever breed me pain,
And wilt thou not restore my joys again?"

BUTLER

(Shifting DRISCOLL'S arm, none too tenderly).

More to the light!

DRISCOLL

(Catching breath with pain).

Ah! Softly, Myles!

JOHN TALBOT

(Leaning forward tensely).

Ah!

FENTON.

Jack! Jack Talbot! What is it that you see?

JOHN TALBOT

(With the anger of a man whose nerves are strained almost beyond endurance).

What should I see but Cromwell's watch-fires along the breen? What else should I see, and the night as black as the mouth of hell? What else should I see, and a pest choke your throat with your fool's questions, Dick Fenton!

[Resumes his watch.

FENTON

(As who should say: "I thank you!")

God 'a' mercy—Captain Talbot!

[Resumes his singing.

DRISCOLL.

God's love! I bade ye have a care, Myles Butler.

BUTLER

(Tying the last bandage).

It's a stout heart you have in you, Phelimy Driscoll—you to be crying out for a scratch. It's better you would have been, you and the like of you, to be stopping at home with your mother.

[Rises and takes up his musket from the corner by the fireplace.]

DRISCOLL.

You—you dare—you call me—coward? Ye black liar! I'll lesson ye! I'll——

[Tries to rise, but in the effort sways weakly forward and rests with his head upon the stool which BUTLER has quitted.]

BUTLER.

A' Heaven's name, ha' done with that hanging tune! Ha' done, Dick Fenton! We're not yet at the gallows' foot.

[Joins JOHN TALBOT at the shot-windows.]

FENTON.

Nay, Myles, for us 'tis like to be nothing half so merry as the gallows.

BUTLER.

Hold your fool's tongue!

NEWCOMBE

(Crying out in his sleep).

Oh! Oh!

JOHN TALBOT.

What was that?

FENTON.

'Twas naught but young Newcombe that cried out
in the clutch of a nightmare.

BUTLER.

'Tis time Kit Newcombe rose and stood his watch.

JOHN TALBOT

(Leaving the window).

Nay, 'tis only a boy. Let him sleep while he can!
Let him sleep!

BUTLER.

Turn and turn at the watch, 'tis but fair. Stir
yonder sluggard awake, Dick!

FENTON.

Aye.

[Starts to rise.

JOHN TALBOT.

Who gives commands here? Sit you down, Fenton!
To your place, Myles Butler!

BUTLER.

Captain of the Gate! D'ye mark the high tone of him, Dick?

JOHN TALBOT

(Tying a fresh bandage about his hand).

You're out there, Myles. There is but one Captain of the Gate of Connaught—he who set me here—my cousin, Hugh Talbot.

BUTLER

(Muttering).

Aye, and it's a deal you'll need to be growing, ere you fill Hugh Talbot's shoes.

JOHN TALBOT.

And that's a true word! But 'twas Hugh Talbot's will that I should command, here at the Bridge of Cashala. And as long as breath is in me I——

DRISCOLL

(Raising his head heavily).

Water! Water! Myles! Dick! Will ye give me to drink, lads? Jack Talbot! I'm choked wi' thirst.

JOHN TALBOT.

There's never a drop of water left us, Phelimy, lad.

FENTON.

Owen Bourke drained the last of it, God rest him!

BUTLER.

'Tis likely our clever new Captain of the Gate will hit on some shift to fill our empty casks.

[DRISCOLL *rises heavily*.

JOHN TALBOT.

Not the new Captain of the Gate. The old Captain of the Gate—Hugh Talbot. He'll be here this day—this hour, maybe.

FENTON.

That tale grows something old, Jack Talbot.

JOHN TALBOT.

He swore he'd bring us succor. He——

[DRISCOLL *tries to unbar the exit door*.

Driscoll! Are you gone mad? Stand you back from that door!

[*Thrusts DRISCOLL from the door*.

DRISCOLL

(*Half delirious*).

Let me forth! The spring—'tis just below—there on the river-bank! Let me slip down to it—but a moment—and drink!

JOHN TALBOT.

Cromwell's soldiers hold the spring.

DRISCOLL.

I care not! Let me forth and drink! Let me forth!

JOHN TALBOT.

'Twould be to your death.

BUTLER.

And what will he get but his death if he stay here,
Captain Talbot?

DRISCOLL

(Struggling with JOHN TALBOT).

I'm choked! I'm choked, I tell ye! Let me go,
Jack Talbot! Let me go!

NEWCOMBE

*(Still half asleep, rises to his knees, with a terrible cry,
and his groping hands upthrust to guard his head).*

God's pity! No! no! no!

DRISCOLL

(Shocked into sanity, staggers back, crossing himself).

God shield us!

BUTLER.

Silence that whelp!

FENTON.

Clear to the rebel camp they'll hear him!

JOHN TALBOT

(Catching NEWCOMBE by the shoulder).

Newcombe! Kit Newcombe!

NEWCOMBE.

Ah, God! Keep them from me! Keep them from me!

JOHN TALBOT.

Ha' done! Ha' done!

NEWCOMBE.

Not that! Not the butt of the muskets! Not that! Not that!

JOHN TALBOT

(Stifling NEWCOMBE'S outcry with a hand upon his mouth).

Wake! You're dreaming!

DRISCOLL.

'Tis ill luck! 'Tis ill luck comes of such dreaming!

NEWCOMBE.

Drogheda! I dreamed I was at Drogheda, where my brother—my brother—they beat out his brains—Cromwell's men—with their clubbed muskets—they——

[Clings shuddering to JOHN TALBOT.]

FENTON.

English officers that serve amongst the Irish—'tis thus that Cromwell uses them!

BUTLER.

English officers—aye, like ourselves!

JOHN TALBOT.

Be quiet, Kit! You're far from Drogheda—here at the Bridge of Cashala.

BUTLER.

Aye, safe in Cashala Gatehouse, with five hundred of Cromwell's men sitting down before it.

JOHN TALBOT.

Keep your watch, Butler!

NEWCOMBE.

You give orders? You still command, Jack? Where's Captain Talbot, then?

[Snatches up his sword and rises.]

BUTLER

(Quitting the window).

Aye, where *is* Captain Talbot?

JOHN TALBOT.

You say——

FENTON

(Rising).

We all say it.

JOHN TALBOT.

Even thou, Dick?

DRISCOLL.

He does not come! Hugh Talbot does not come!

FENTON.

He bade us hold the bridge one day. We've held it three days now.

BUTLER.

And where is Hugh Talbot with the aid he promised?

JOHN TALBOT.

He promised. He has never broken faith. He will bring us aid.

FENTON.

Aye, if he be living!

DRISCOLL.

Living? You mean that he—Och, he's dead! Hugh Talbot's dead! And we're destroyed! We're destroyed!

NEWCOMBE

(*Cowering*).

The butt of the muskets!

FENTON.

God!

[*Deliberately BUTLER lays down his musket.*]

JOHN TALBOT.

Take up your piece!

BUTLER.

Renounce me if I do!

FENTON.

I stand with you, Myles Butler. Make terms for us, John Talbot, or on my soul, we'll make them for ourselves.

JOHN TALBOT.

Surrender?

NEWCOMBE.

Will Cromwell spare us, an we yield ourselves now? Will he spare us? Will he——

FENTON.

'Tis our one chance.

NEWCOMBE.

Give me that white rag!

[Crosses and snatches a bandage from chimney-piece.]

FENTON

(Drawing his ramrod).

Here's a staff!

[Together FENTON and NEWCOMBE make ready a flag of truce.]

JOHN TALBOT.

You swore to hold the bridge.

BUTLER.

Swore to hold it one day. We've held it three days now.

FENTON.

And the half of us are slain.

NEWCOMBE.

And we've no water—and no food!

JOHN TALBOT

(Pointing to the powder keg).

We have powder in plenty.

DRISCOLL.

We can't *drink* powder. Ah, for God's love, be swift, Dick Fenton! Be swift!

JOHN TALBOT.

You shall not show that white flag!

[Starts toward FENTON, hand on sword.]

BUTLER

(Pinioning JOHN TALBOT).

God's death! We shall! Help me here, Phelimy!

JOHN TALBOT

(Struggling with BUTLER and DRISCOLL).

A black curse on you!

BUTLER.

We'll not be butchered like oxen in the shambles!

JOHN TALBOT.

Your oaths!

BUTLER.

We'll not fight longer to be knocked on the head at the last.

NEWCOMBE.

No! No! Not that! Out with the flag, Dick!

FENTON.

A light here at the grating!

[NEWCOMBE turns to take a candle, obedient to FENTON's order. At that moment, close at hand, a bugle sounds.]

JOHN TALBOT.

Hark!

DRISCOLL.

The bugle! They're upon us!

BUTLER

(Releasing his hold on JOHN TALBOT).

What was that?

JOHN TALBOT.

A summons to parley. What see you, Fenton?

FENTON

(At the shot-window).

Torches coming from the boreen, and a white flag beneath them. I can see the faces.

[With a cry.

Look, Jack! A' God's name! Look!

[JOHN TALBOT springs to the window.

DRISCOLL.

What is it you're seeing?

FENTON.

It is——

JOHN TALBOT

(Turning from the window).

'Tis Hugh Talbot comes! 'Tis the Captain of the Gate!

BUTLER.

With them? A prisoner?

JOHN TALBOT.

No, no! No prisoner! He wears his sword.

[BUTLER snatches up his piece and resumes watch.

FENTON.

Then he'll have made terms with them! Terms!

NEWCOMBE

(Embracing DRISCOLL).

Terms for us! Terms for us!

JOHN TALBOT.

I told ye truth. He has come. Hugh Talbot has come.

[Goes to door.]

HUGH TALBOT

(Speaks outside).

Open! I come alone, and in peace. Open unto me!

JOHN TALBOT.

Who goes there?

HUGH TALBOT

(Outside).

The Captain of the Gate!

[JOHN TALBOT unbars the door, and bars it again upon the entrance of HUGH TALBOT. The latter comes slowly into the room. He is a man in his late thirties, a tall, martial figure, clad in much worn velvet and leather, with sword at side. The five salute him as he enters.]

HUGH TALBOT

(Halts and for a moment surveys his followers).

Well, lads?

[The five stand trembling on the edge of a nervous break, unable for the moment to speak.]

NEWCOMBE.

We thought—we thought—that you—that you——
[*Breaks into childish sobbing.*]

FENTON.

What terms will they grant us, sir?

JOHN TALBOT.

Sir, we have held the bridge.

HUGH TALBOT.

You five——

JOHN TALBOT.

Bourke is dead, sir, and Tregaris, and Langdale,
and—and James Talbot, my brother.

DRISCOLL.

And we've had no water, sir, these many hours.

HUGH TALBOT.

So! You're wounded, Phelimy.

DRISCOLL.

'Tis not worth heeding, sir.

HUGH TALBOT.

Kit! Kit!

[*At the voice NEWCOMBE pulls himself together.*]

A light here! Dick, you've your pouch under your hand?

FENTON.

'Tis here, sir.

[Offers his tobacco pouch.]

HUGH TALBOT

(Filling his pipe).

Leave the window, Myles! They've promised us a half hour's truce—and Cromwell's a man of his word.

NEWCOMBE

(Bringing a lighted candle).

He'll let us pass free now, sir, will he not?

HUGH TALBOT

(Lighting his pipe at the candle).

You're not afraid, Kit?

NEWCOMBE.

I? Faith, no, sir. No! Not now!

HUGH TALBOT.

Sit ye down, Phelimy, lad! You look dead on your feet. Give me to see that arm!

[As HUGH TALBOT starts toward DRISCOLL, his eye falls on the open keg of powder. He draws back hastily, covering his lighted pipe.]

Jack Talbot! Who taught ye to leave your powder uncovered, where lighted match was laid?

BUTLER.

My blame, sir.

[*Covers the keg.*]

JOHN TALBOT.

We opened the keg, and then——

FENTON.

Truth, we did not cover it again, being somewhat pressed for time.

[*The five laugh, half hysterically.*]

HUGH TALBOT

(*Sitting by fire.*)

And you never thought, maybe, that in that keg there was powder enough to blow the bridge of Cashala to hell?

JOHN TALBOT.

It seemed a matter of small moment, sir.

HUGH TALBOT.

Small moment! Powder enough, put case ye set it there, at the stairhead—d'ye follow me?—powder enough to make an end of Cashala Bridge for all time—aye, and of all within the Gatehouse. You never thought on that, eh?

JOHN TALBOT.

We had so much to think on, sir.

HUGH TALBOT.

I did suspect as much. So I came hither to recall the powder to your minds.

DRISCOLL.

We thought——

[BUTLER motions him to be silent.

We thought maybe you would not be coming at all, sir. Maybe you would be dead.

HUGH TALBOT.

Well? What an if I had been dead? You had your orders. You did not dream of giving up the Bridge of Cashala—eh, Myles Butler?

BUTLER

(After a moment).

No, sir.

HUGH TALBOT.

Nor you, Dick Fenton?

FENTON.

Sir, I—No!

HUGH TALBOT

(Smoking throughout).

Good lads! The wise heads were saying I was a stark fool to set you here at Cashala. But I said: I can be trusting the young riders that are learning their lessons in war from me. I'll be safe putting my

honor into their hands. And I was right, wasn't I, Phelimy Driscoll?

DRISCOLL.

Give us the chance, sir, and we'll be holding Cashala, even against the devil himself!

FENTON.

Aye, well said!

HUGH TALBOT.

Sure, 'tis a passing good substitute for the devil sits yonder in Cromwell's tent.

NEWCOMBE

(With a shudder).

Cromwell!

HUGH TALBOT.

Aye, he was slaying your brother at Drogheda, Kit, and a fine, gallant lad your brother was. And I'm thinking you're like him, Kit. Else I shouldn't be trusting you here at Cashala.

NEWCOMBE.

I—I—— Will they let us keep our swords?


HUGH TALBOT.

Well, it's with yourselves it lies, whether you'll keep them or not.

FENTON.

He means—we mean—on what terms, sir, do we surrender?

HUGH TALBOT.

Surrender? Terms? 

JOHN TALBOT.

We thought, sir, from your coming under their white flag—perhaps you had made terms for us.

HUGH TALBOT.

How could I make terms?

NEWCOMBE.

Captain!

[At a look from HUGH TALBOT he becomes silent, fighting for self-control.]

HUGH TALBOT.

How could I make terms that you would hear to? Cashala Bridge is the gate of Connaught.

JOHN TALBOT.

Yes.

HUGH TALBOT.

Give Cromwell Cashala Bridge, and he'll be on the heels of our women and our little ones. At what price would ye be selling their safety?

DRISCOLL.

Cromwell—when he takes us—when he takes us——

NEWCOMBE.

He'll knock us on the head!

HUGH TALBOT.

Yes. At the last. Your five lives against our people's safety. You'd not give up the bridge?

JOHN TALBOT.

Five? Our five? But you—you are the sixth.

FENTON.

You stay with us, Captain. And then we'll fight—you'll see how we shall fight.

HUGH TALBOT.

I shall be seeing you fight, perhaps, but I cannot stay now at Cashala.

[*Rises.*]

DRISCOLL.

Ye won't be staying with us?

BUTLER

(*Laughing harshly*).

Now on my soul! Is this your faith, Hugh Talbot? One liar I've followed, Charles Stuart, the son of a liar, and now a second liar——

JOHN TALBOT

(Catching BUTLER'S throat).

A plague choke you!

HUGH TALBOT

(Stepping between JOHN TALBOT and BUTLER).

Ha' done, Jack! Ha' done! What more, Myles Butler?

BUTLER.

Tell us whither you go, when you turn your back on us that shall die at Cashala—you that come walking under the rebel flag—that swore to bring us aid—and have not brought it! Tell us whither you go now!

HUGH TALBOT.

Well, I'm a shade doubtful, Myles, my lad, though hopeful of the best.

BUTLER.

'Tis to Cromwell you go—you that have made your peace with him—that have sold us——

DRISCOLL.

Captain! A' God's name, what is it that you're meaning?

HUGH TALBOT.

I mean that you shall hold the Bridge of Cashala—whatever happen to you—whatever happen to me——

FENTON.

To you? Captain Talbot!

HUGH TALBOT.

I am going unto Cromwell—as you said, Myles. I gave my promise.

DRISCOLL.

Your promise?

JOHN TALBOT.

We—have been very blind. So—they made you prisoner?

HUGH TALBOT.

Aye, Jack. When I tried to cut my way through to bring you aid. And they granted me this half hour on my parole to come unto you.

JOHN TALBOT.

To come——

HUGH TALBOT.

To counsel you to surrender. And I have given you counsel. Hold the bridge! Hold it! Whatever they do!

DRISCOLL.

Captain! Captain Talbot! God of Heaven! If you go back—'tis killed you'll be among them!

HUGH TALBOT.

A little sooner than you lads? Aye, true!

FENTON.

They cannot! Even Cromwell——

HUGH TALBOT.

Tut, tut, Dick! It's little ye know of Cromwell.

JOHN TALBOT.

Then—you mean——

HUGH TALBOT.

An you surrender Cashala, we may all six pass free.
An you hold Cashala, they will hang me, here before
your eyes.

[DRISCOLL *gives a rattling cry.*

BUTLER.

God forgive me!

HUGH TALBOT.

You have your orders. Hold the bridge!
[*Turns to door.*

JOHN TALBOT

(*Barring his way*).

No, no! You shan't go forth!

FENTON.

God's mercy, no!

HUGH TALBOT.

Are you stark crazed?

FENTON.

You shall stay with us.

JOHN TALBOT.

What's your pledged word to men that know not honor?

HUGH TALBOT.

My word. Unbar the door, Jack. Why, lad, we're traveling the same road.

FENTON.

God! But we'll give them a good fight at the last.

[Goes to the shot-window.]

Take up your musket, Kit.

NEWCOMBE.

But I—Captain! When you are gone, I—I——

HUGH TALBOT.

I'll not be far. You'll hold the bridge?

JOHN TALBOT.

Aye, sir.

BUTLER.

We've powder enough—you said it, sir,—laid there at the stairhead, to blow the bridge to hell

HUGH TALBOT.

Aye, Myles, you've hit it!

[Holds out his hand.]

BUTLER.

Not yet, sir!

HUGH TALBOT.

Hereafter, then. God speed you, lads!

JOHN TALBOT.

Speed you, sir!

[All five stand at salute as HUGH TALBOT goes out. In the moment's silence upon his exit, JOHN TALBOT bars the door and turns to his comrades.]

You have—Hugh Talbot's orders. Take your pieces! Driscoll! Newcombe!

[Obediently the two join FENTON at windows.]
Butler!

BUTLER.

Aye! We have Hugh Talbot's orders.

[Points to powder keg.]

JOHN TALBOT.

Are you meaning——

BUTLER.

It's not I will be failing him now!

FENTON

(At window).

God! They waste no time.

JOHN TALBOT.

Already—they have dared——

FENTON.

Here—this moment—under our very eyes!

DRISCOLL.

Christ Jesus!

*[Goes back from the window, with his arm
across his eyes, and falls on his knees in
headlong prayer.]*

JOHN TALBOT.

Kit! Kit Newcombe!

[Motions him to window.]

NEWCOMBE.

I cannot! I——

JOHN TALBOT.

Look forth! Look! And remember—when you
meet them—remember!

*[NEWCOMBE stands swaying, clutching at the
grating of the window, as he looks forth.]*

Lads!

*[Motions to BUTLER and FENTON to carry the
powder to the stairhead.]*

The time is short. His orders!

[DRISCOLL *raises his head and gazes fixedly toward the center of the room.*

FENTON.

Yonder, at the stairhead.

BUTLER.

Aye.

[FENTON *and* BUTLER *carry the keg to the door.*

NEWCOMBE.

Not that! Not that death! No! No!

JOHN TALBOT.

Be silent! And look yonder! Driscoll! Fetch the light! Newcombe! Come! You have your places, all.

DRISCOLL.

But, Captain! The sixth man—where will the sixth man be standing?

[*There is a blank silence, in which the men look questioningly at DRISCOLL's rapt face and at one another.*

JOHN TALBOT.

Sixth?

FENTON.

What sixth?

DRISCOLL.

The blind eyes of ye! Yonder!

[Comes to the salute, even as, a few moments before, he has saluted HUGH TALBOT, living.]

[NEWCOMBE gives a smothered cry, as one who half sees, and takes courage. FENTON dazedly starts to salute. Outside a bugle sounds, and a voice, almost at the door, is heard to speak.]

VOICE OUTSIDE.

For the last time: will you surrender you?

JOHN TALBOT

(In a loud and confident voice).

No! Not while our commander stands with us!

VOICE OUTSIDE.

And who might your commander be?

JOHN TALBOT.

Hugh Talbot, the Captain of the Gate! The light here, Phelimy.

[JOHN TALBOT bends to set the candle to the powder that shall destroy Cashala Gate-house, and all within it. His mates are gathered round him, with steady, bright faces, for in the little space left vacant in their midst they know in that minute that HUGH TALBOT stands.]

CURTAIN

THE DARK OF THE DAWN

THE PEOPLE

BASIL TOLLOCHO, Colonel of Horse in the Imperial service

ANDREAS BUCQUOI, his kinsman and captain-lieutenant

GERHARD, COUNT VON MANDERSPERG, in the service of Saxe-Weimar

HUGO VON MANDERSPERG

THE PLACE

A little village in Pomerania, which has been seized and occupied by a wing of the Emperor's vast army, which has just won a victory over the forces of Saxe-Weimar

THE PERIOD

The latter part of the Thirty Years' War

THE DARK OF THE DAWN

AS the fortune of war has ordained, the living-room of a sober burgher dwelling has become the quarters of COLONEL BASIL TOLLOCHO. It is a spacious, dark room, with dim wainscot, smoky plaster above, and heavy roof-beams. A heavy door leads to the village street. There are narrower doors to inner rooms; and there are two windows, the diamond panes of which are obscured with glistening white frost. The room is furnished with a great porcelain stove (stage left) in which is a roaring fire, a settle of dark oak before it, and a table near the settle. There is another table (stage right) on which are writing materials, cups and flagons, and a brace of pistols in holsters. Against the wall is a carved chest of drawers. Beneath the windows are forms. Beside the writing table is a great chair, covered with a shaggy bearskin. Here and there are several stools. There are signs, in this burgher interior, of a military occupation. Saddle-bags and a saddle are cast down upon the floor. Pieces of armor—gauntlets and back and breast pieces—rest on a form. Across the settle is hung a heavy military cloak. On both the tables are lighted candles, more than half burned out. The whole effect of the room is business-like and stern—a conqueror's quarters.

The time is four o'clock of a bitter morning in Janu-

ary. *Never for a moment is it forgotten that outside is bitter cold. The fire glows in the stove. The frost on the windows gleams whitely. From time to time A SENTINEL, in a long Cossack coat, his face reddened with cold, is seen to pass the windows, in the outer dark.*

At the table by the fire, poring upon a map which is unrolled before him, sits BASIL TOLLOCHO. He is a man of forty, tall, lithe, dark, with close-cropped beard and mustaches, and short hair, which is slightly grayed upon the temples. He wears military dress, of somber color, but good fabric, long boots with spurs, a sword in baldric, an officer's scarf of silk. Obviously he is a commander, every inch of him, both of himself and of other men.

After a moment the SENTINEL'S voice is heard outside. At the sound TOLLOCHO lays down the map and listens.

SENTINEL

(Without).

Stand, ho!

BUCQUOI.

A friend!

SENTINEL.

The word, friend!

BUCQUOI.

Pope and Emperor!

SENTINEL.

Pass, friend!

[There is a stamping of feet at the very threshold, and BUCQUOI enters the room. He is about thirty, a competent, ruthless professional soldier, lean, alert, keen-eyed. He wears the dress of a horse-captain, and over all a heavy cloak, to which clings a little rime of white snow.]

Throughout the talk that follows the SENTINEL on his beat is seen to pass and re-pass the windows.

TOLLOCHO

(Turns in his seat, alert and interested).

What news, Bucquoi?

BUCQUOI.

No news, sir, yet, of him you seek—of young Von Mandersperg.

TOLLOCHO.

Drink a cup against the cold.

BUCQUOI.

I thank you, sir.

[Lays off his cloak, fills a cup at the table, and drinks while he talks.]

TOLLOCHO.

You followed the last clue?

BUCQUOI.

The clue that led to Leslie's camp? 'Twas a wild-
goose chase.

TOLLOCHO.

But you spoke with this prisoner of Leslie's?

BUCQUOI.

Aye, sir.

TOLLOCHO.

A young man, and a gentleman, 'twas said.

BUCQUOI.

True, sir, but never son to the Count von Manders-
perg.

TOLLOCHO.

How know you that?

BUCQUOI.

This young man, Leslie's prisoner, is named Kaul-
bach, not Von Mandersperg, Ansel Kaulbach.

TOLLOCHO.

Go to! A name is easily changed.

BUCQUOI.

Moreover, he was not taken in arms against us, as
runs the rumor of young Von Mandersperg.

TOLLOCHO.

So! That is to the point. Tell me, then, how was Ansel Kaulbach taken?

BUCQUOI.

Within our lines, masking as a sutler's boy.

TOLLOCHO.

A spy, eh?

BUCQUOI.

It seems so, sir—scarcely the trade for the son of Count von Mandersperg.

TOLLOCHO.

Nay, 'twere a fit trade for his father's son! But young Von Mandersperg was openly in arms against us. I cannot doubt that story. So this Kaulbach is never him we seek.

[BUCQUOI *takes some papers from his coat pocket.*

What have you there?

BUCQUOI.

Papers in cipher, sir. Leslie took them from Kaulbach.

TOLLOCHO.

Suffer me!

[*Takes papers.*

BUCQUOI.

Leslie knows your skill to unravel such writings. And he would not hang his prisoner, Kaulbach, till he be assured of what is in the papers.

TOLLOCHO.

The case is clear against the prisoner, is it not?

BUCQUOI.

So it would seem. But Leslie is a Scot and cautious. He would give him the benefit of the doubt, until these papers be unriddled.

TOLLOCHO.

I'll about it.

[*Scans papers closely.*]

No, 'tis not by reading crosswise. A knotted problem! So! So!

BUCQUOI.

Under your favor, sir, I begin to question if the tale they brought you can be true. These two days I have scoured the camp. If young Von Mandersperg were indeed a prisoner in the hands of any of our people——

TOLLOCHO.

The tale is true. The Count von Mandersperg's son is somewhere alive within our lines.

BUCQUOI.

But I do not see the way——

TOLLOCHO.

Nor do I see the way clearly. I do but know that Von Mandersperg's son will be delivered unto me this hour. Take horse, Andreas, and ride to our southward line. Boguslav and his forayers have this hour straggled in from the battle-field. It may be you shall find the young man in their keeping.

BUCQUOI.

I'll about it, sir.

TOLLOCHO.

You have made it known throughout the host that I will give a thousand pistoles to the man that delivers young Von Mandersperg to me?

BUCQUOI.

A thousand pistoles!

TOLLOCHO.

Well?

BUCQUOI.

'Tis a ransom for a general, sir. And this man is but a paltry subaltern of horse.

TOLLOCHO.

He is the Count von Mandersperg's one son. To me he is worth a general's ransom. Twelve hundred pistoles—fifteen hundred, if he is delivered unto me this hour. About it, kinsman! The time is short.

BUCQUOI.

Short, sir?

TOLLOCHO.

Count Gerhard von Mandersperg will be my guest this hour.

BUCQUOI.

What! The Count himself?

TOLLOCHO.

Aye, sent as commissioner to treat with us, touching the ransoming of the prisoners we made in the battle. I am deputed to receive him. And I would greet the Count with his one son standing here at my elbow—my prisoner, mine to deal with as I list. The time is short. Go seek in Boguslav's lines!

BUCQUOI.

I'll ride at once, sir.

TOLLOCHO

(Rising).

Stay! I shall have further need of you at dawn.

BUCQUOI.

I am ready, sir.

TOLLOCHO.

Choose you sufficient escort. A month's leave is yours.

BUCQUOI.

I thank——

TOLLOCHO.

Wait! You shall ride south, to the Turkish frontier, and you shall sell into the service of the galleys the man that I shall deliver unto you.

BUCQUOI

(Not shocked, but quite honestly surprised).

The galleys!

TOLLOCHO.

Well, kinsman? This scruple at the deed is new in you.

BUCQUOI.

Faith, 'tis a thing of custom with me, and with most of my fellows, but you—— Kinsman, I never knew you put a man to pain for sheer wantonness. You act for cause, I know.

TOLLOCHO.

Aye, for cause!

BUCQUOI.

Then, for kinship's sake, will you not give me to know why you would thrust this young man living into hell?

TOLLOCHO.

I take the victor's right of young Von Mandersperg, even as aforetime his father took the victor's right of— of another!

BUCQUOI

(After a moment).

You would say, sir?

TOLLOCHO

(Speaking with effort).

I have no son, even as Von Mandersperg at dawn shall find himself without a son—worse than without a son! She to whom I was new wedded——

[Breaks off.

BUCQUOI.

'Twas Elisabeth Waldstein, of Bohemian stock.

TOLLOCHO.

What further do you know?

BUCQUOI.

She perished when Mansfeld's demi-devils sacked the Bohemian convent where you had placed her for her safety ere you rode to war.

TOLLOCHO.

No. You are at fault there, Andreas. Her body did not perish.

BUCQUOI.

What! You say that your wife escaped?

TOLLOCHO.

No! I say that she died months later—the plaything of Gerhard von Mandersperg.

BUCQUOI.

His—— Kinsman! And your wife!

TOLLOCHO.

A common story, these days! But she was a soul as white as any lily—and my love!

BUCQUOI.

Von Mandersperg—I remember! He was a captain then in Mansfeld's band—the band that sacked the convent. And he——

TOLLOCHO.

The fortune of war gave her into his keeping. The fortune of war held me a prisoner four years in a Saxon castle, till every trace of her was lost. Now the fortune of war gives Von Mandersperg's son into my hands. And by the God that is above the fortune of war, in the dark of the dawn Von Mandersperg shall say with me: I have no son!

BUCQUOI.

Send it be I that bring him to you!

[Snatches up his cloak and starts from room.]

TOLLOCHO

(Courteously).

Stay! Your cloak. 'Tis perishing cold.

BUCQUOI

(Halts, and muffles his cloak about him).

Faith, yes, and colder every hour.

TOLLOCHO.

So? Then bid the sentry take his station in the byre where he will be sheltered.

BUCQUOI.

But——

TOLLOCHO.

Nay, man, 'tis for my dignity, not for use, that he is set. The camp is guarded elsewhere, and well guarded. Get you gone!

BUCQUOI.

I will be here again before the dawn. And mark you, I'll not come alone!

TOLLOCHO.

I trust you, kinsman.

[BUCQUOI salutes and goes out. His squeaking footsteps are heard receding through the hard-packed snow. From this point the SENTINEL ceases to pass the window. TOLLOCHO seats himself at the table (right) and spreads out before him the papers taken from Kaulbach.]

Now for this young spy's cipher. H'm! A tangled code! Will this serve, perchance?

[As TOLLOCHO sits poring over the papers, a white, drawn young face is seen for a moment to gaze in at the window, eying the

fire, not TOLLOCHO, and speedily to disappear.

Ah! Faith, I have it. There's the key to the cipher, Leslie! A clever spy, this! Our lines described—our numbers—matter fit to hang a dozen men! To hang—and so 'tis I that give good-night to Ansel Kaulbach!

[Starts to write out the translation of the papers, and then, with a quick, instinctive motion snatches up a pistol and turns to the door. Very faintly is audible a sound, as of a numbed hand's stirring the latch.]

What's here?

[The door is pushed inward. HUGO VON MANDERSPERG stumbles blinking into the light, closes the door behind him, and stands leaning against it for support. He is a lithe, dark lad of fifteen, with long-lashed gray eyes, that one feels instinctively he must have had from his mother. He is white-faced, and very nearly outworn with sleeplessness and rough handling. He wears the disheveled dress of a cornet of horse—a soiled and torn shirt, sleeveless doublet of a dull reddish hue, breeches of the same, horseman's boots. A bit of cord is bound about one wrist, and on his other wrist shows the red excoriation where the cord has pressed. TOLLOCHO rises and surveys him, in half contemptuous surprise.]

My word!

HUGO.

Please! If you will let me to the fire—only one minute—only one minute——

TOLLOCHO

(Business-like, and with no great compassion, since he is long accustomed to sights of pity, goes to HUGO and, lifting his limp arm, looks down at the tell-tale bit of cord).

So! One of Saxe-Weimar's captured subalterns, are you?

HUGO.

If you will let me—have but one minute——

TOLLOCHO.

Whom did you break from?

HUGO.

Only one minute—before you hand me over to them—only one minute—and the fire——

[Staggers.]

TOLLOCHO

(Who has never put a man to pain for sheer wantonness).

Steady! Sit down and warm you.

[Catches HUGO's elbow and eases him down on the settle.]

HUGO.

I had not thought—'twould take so long to die. I wanted to die—when I found I couldn't pass the sentries. I thought I could freeze and die quickly—but it took so long—so long—and I saw the light of the fire—and then—and then——

TOLLOCHO

(Meets HUGO's eyes. Half against his will, and to his own surprise, he takes the cloak that hangs across the settle).

Put that round you!

HUGO

(Blankly).

Sir?

TOLLOCHO

(Flinging the cloak round HUGO).

Put the cloak round you—so! You can sit here till the guard come to fetch you.

[Goes to the table and fills a cup.]

HUGO.

The guard? It does not matter—nothing matters—if only I can be warm again!

TOLLOCHO.

Here! Drink this! Drink it! All of it!

HUGO

(Having drunk).

I thank you, sir.

[In the act of drinking, the cloak has slipped from him.]

TOLLOCHO.

Pull up that cloak!

[As TOLLOCHO reaches out his hand to adjust the cloak, HUGO flinches as if from a blow.]

I have no thought to strike you.

HUGO.

I—I ask your pardon!

TOLLOCHO.

So you've not been handled over-tenderly, these last days.

HUGO

(Embarrassed and ashamed, looks down and tugs at the bit of cord upon his wrist.)

Fortune of war, sir.

TOLLOCHO.

Hold out your arm.

[With his knife he cuts away the cord.]

It seems they would not take your parole.

HUGO.

I could not give it, sir.

TOLLOCHO.

Why play the fool? You know you can't escape.

HUGO.

I must! I must! It's my one chance. I gnawed the ropes, but I couldn't pass the sentries. And now it's all to begin again! It's all to begin again! My God! Why didn't I die out yonder? Why didn't I——

TOLLOCHO.

Steady! You're old enough to know the rules of this rough game. Content your captors with the ransom that they ask, and you'll be free to go your way.

HUGO.

I can't pay ransom.

TOLLOCHO.

Eh?

HUGO.

I tell you I can't! I can't! I can't ransom myself. They tried to make me write for ransom to my father. They said if I didn't—they'd put out my eyes. Do you hear? They'd put out my eyes!

TOLLOCHO.

So, so! Well, I should counsel you, write to your father.

HUGO.

I can't! I've left him—forever! I won't beg of him—not of him! Even if they kill me—however they kill me—I can't beg of my father.

TOLLOCHO.

Try your other kindred, then.

HUGO.

There's no one—no one, I tell you—no one in all the world! I can't ransom myself—whatever they do to me—whatever——

[*Rises.*

Oh, why didn't I die? Why didn't I——

[*Blindly turns toward the door.*

TOLLOCHO

(*Grasping HUGO's arm.*)

Sit you down!

HUGO.

Let me go! I pray you! As if I hadn't come in here! Let me go out again—into the cold! I'll have better courage this time. I'll die this time. Oh, for God's sake! Let me go! Let me go! Let me go!

TOLLOCHO

(*Throughout he has been looking down into HUGO's eyes.*)

Who are the men whose prisoner you are?

HUGO.

They're going to blind me!

TOLLOCHO.

Who are they?

HUGO.

'Tis a Greek captain, Corvinus, in Boguslav's command. Won't you let me have this one last chance? Won't you let me go?

TOLLOCHO.

At what figure does he set your ransom?

HUGO.

But I can't pay it! I can't——

TOLLOCHO.

At what figure?

HUGO.

One hundred pistoles. Won't you give me this one chance? It's my eyes, I tell you! My eyes!

TOLLOCHO.

Perhaps your eyes are worth a hundred pistoles. You will consider yourself my prisoner, on your parole. Sit down!

[HUGO *sinks down again upon the settle.* TOLLOCHO *returns to the table and sits to write.*

If I let you go unransomed, you will of course promise me never again to bear arms against the Emperor.

HUGO.

But you don't mean you will ransom me and—and let me go—unransomed—let me go—free?

TOLLOCHO.

I think it probable.

HUGO.

Free? And you mean it! I—I——

TOLLOCHO.

There's naught to say. Rest silent! And sleep, if you can.

HUGO.

I haven't dared to sleep, sir—till this hour.

[Rests his folded arms on the table by the settle, and lays his head heavily upon them.]

TOLLOCHO

(Writing).

So, so! To Captain Corvinus: To give him to know that his prisoner, Cornet—— What's your name, lad?

HUGO

(Drowsily).

Hugo.

TOLLOCHO.

Hugo what else?

HUGO.

Hugo von Mandersperg.

TOLLOCHO.

Von Mandersperg!

[After a moment.]

Did I hear you aright? Who is your father?

HUGO.

Gerhard, the Count von Mandersperg.

[Falls asleep.]

TOLLOCHO.

Von Mandersperg—aye! The boy, a prisoner among Boguslav's men! His boy! His!

[Goes to HUGO's side.]

Let me look on you! Asleep, eh? So! *His* son!

[BUCQUOI comes again into the room.]

You, Andreas?

BUCQUOI.

Good tidings, sir! Young Von Mandersperg is——

TOLLOCHO.

Yonder is Von Mandersperg's son.

BUCQUOI.

Here? How came he——

TOLLOCHO.

He broke from his captors. He came to me, of all men in this vast camp. I knew that he must come.

[Sits again at table.]

BUCQUOI.

The hand of God is in it!

TOLLOCHO.

God or the devil! Well! Can you ride this hour?

BUCQUOI.

Southward, you mean?

TOLLOCHO.

Yes, to the Turkish frontier, with Von Mandersperg's son. This hour!

BUCQUOI.

This hour? But Von Mandersperg himself has not yet seen——

TOLLOCHO.

He shall hear. That is enough. Come! Come! I'm wearied of this business. Mount your men and ride forthwith.

BUCQUOI.

I shall, sir.

TOLLOCHO.

Whilst I write out this cipher, that shall hang Leslie's spy. Wait! Take—him with you—now. I have no more to say to Von Mandersperg's son. Take him from my sight. At once!

[Bends over his papers, determined to lose himself in them.]

BUCQUOI

(Goes to HUGO and shakes him roughly).

Come, sirrah! Waken! Up with you! Wake, I say!

HUGO

(Starts up, half dazed with sleep, with a frightened cry).

Ah! Let me go! Let me go!

[As he comes to himself, he sees TOLLOCHO and crosses swiftly to his side.

Thank God! Thank God! I thought that I had dreamed you! I thought that——

[In the silence he hears his own shaken voice, and at the sound controls himself.

I—I ask your pardon. I was half asleep. I'm sorry, sir.

BUCQUOI.

Enough of talking! Come, Von Mandersperg!

TOLLOCHO

(With his eyes fixed upon his writing, determined not to look at HUGO).

You are to go with Captain Bucquoi.

HUGO.

You're sending me back this hour to mine own camp? Faith, sir, you're better than your word!

BUCQUOI.

Aye, he keeps his word. March out!

TOLLOCHO

(*Writing*).

Go!

HUGO.

But won't you let me—since you wouldn't let me say, "I thank you" ere I slept—won't you——

[*He holds out his hand, standing quietly, with his intent eyes on TOLLOCHO. There is a moment's silence. TOLLOCHO's pen wavers, but he still writes on, without glancing at the boy.*]

BUCQUOI.

Come!

[BUCQUOI lays a hand on HUGO's shoulder. Obediently HUGO goes with him toward the door, but he keeps his eyes still upon TOLLOCHO. When he has almost reached the threshold TOLLOCHO, unable to bear more, dashes down his pen and rises.]

TOLLOCHO.

Wait!

[*With a quick stride he goes to HUGO and almost fiercely snatches him out of BUCQUOI's hold.*]

You will not ride southward, Andreas.

BUCQUOI.

You alter your purpose?

TOLLOCHO.

Yes.

BUCQUOI.

You remember what befell, sixteen years ago?

TOLLOCHO.

Is he to blame for what befell sixteen years ago?

HUGO.

You mean, sir——

TOLLOCHO.

I mean—you shall go free, as I promised.

HUGO.

I——

TOLLOCHO.

You have no call to thank me. Go in yonder. Have your sleep out in safety. Go!

HUGO.

As you bid, sir.

[Bewildered, he goes obediently into an inner room.]

BUCQUOI.

But 'tis Von Mandersperg's son!

TOLLOCHO.

What voice had he in the choosing of his father?

[Takes papers and money from the table.]

This letter and this money to Corvinus. I ransom young Von Mandersperg of him.

BUCQUOI.

Aye, sir.

TOLLOCHO.

And this to Leslie.

BUCQUOI.

The translation of the cipher papers that were taken from Kaulbach?

TOLLOCHO.

Aye. The death warrant of the spy, Ansel Kaulbach, condemned by those same papers. About it!

BUCQUOI.

Aye, with speed, sir.

[As BUCQUOI turns to the door, there is heard without the creak of horse-hoofs in the snow. He glances out at the window.]

In good time! Colonel, 'twill be the Count von Mandersperg is dismounting at your door.

TOLLOCHO.

Gerhard von Mandersperg!

BUCQUOI.

And you will give him back his only son?

TOLLOCHO.

I do not see my way clear, but this I see clear. I must keep the word that I pledged to that lad—my word to that lad!

[VON MANDERSPERG comes into the room. He is a man of TOLLOCHO's own age, but stockier, fairer, of a more northern type. A powerful, cold man, by no means a debauched sensualist. He is fully armed, richly dressed, in military fashion, and wrapped in a heavy, furred cloak.]

VON MANDERSPERG.

I speak to Colonel Tollocho?

TOLLOCHO.

He is your servant, Count von Mandersperg. About your mission, Captain.

[BUCQUOI salutes and goes out.]

Will you sit, Count?

VON MANDERSPERG.

'Tis a cursedly cold morning.

[Sits by fire.]

TOLLOCHO

(Pouring).

A cup of wine?

VON MANDERSPERG

(Taking the proffered cup).

My thanks! You'll drink with me?

TOLLOCHO.

Hardly.

VON MANDERSPERG.

Eh?

TOLLOCHO.

The Emperor may choose the man for whom I pour.
I choose for myself the man with whom I drink.

[Sits at table.]

VON MANDERSPERG.

By that I'd know you, if by nothing else. You are
Basil Tollocho.

TOLLOCHO.

And my wife was Elisabeth Waldstein.

VON MANDERSPERG.

So! 'Tis ten years since we last encountered,
Colonel.

TOLLOCHO.

You came then under a flag of truce, even as now.

VON MANDERSPERG.

And you spoke some words which you have not yet
made good.

TOLLOCHO.

The game is not played out, however, Count. You have a son, I believe?

VON MANDERSPERG

(Quickly, startled).

My son? What of my son?

TOLLOCHO.

He served in the army of Saxe-Weimar, which we routed three days ago—served as cornet of horse, and——

VON MANDERSPERG

(Steady and reassured).

As cornet of horse? My son? Ah, I see. Yes. What then?

TOLLOCHO.

And he is now a prisoner.

VON MANDERSPERG.

A prisoner in your hands, this son of mine?

TOLLOCHO.

You judge me rightly.

VON MANDERSPERG.

And you think to refuse my proffers of ransom? You think to torture me by torturing this boy? You think——

TOLLOCHO.

I think I should waste words to talk with you, under a flag of truce. As for this boy of yours, I shall do by him even as I promised.

VON MANDERSPERG.

'Twas so I read you.

TOLLOCHO.

As I promised. No, you would not understand.

VON MANDERSPERG.

Well enough I understand that this is a different ending than you purposed to your tragedy.

TOLLOCHO.

God knows, a different ending!

VON MANDERSPERG.

I have small skill, it seems, to play the part you had assigned to me. You have this son of mine? Good! Come! What next? The strapado for him? The rack? You see, I sit unmoved. My word, Tollocho, you should have better shaped your tragedy!

[BUCQUOI enters, in hot excitement.]

BUCQUOI.

Colonel! Colonel Tollocho! Here's luck—luck of the devil's own! A curse on Leslie! The lad is dead!

VON MANDERSPERG.

Excellent well devised!

TOLLOCHO.

The lad? What do you mean?

BUCQUOI.

Aye, the lad you sought—young Von Mandersperg!

TOLLOCHO.

Von Mandersperg!

VON MANDERSPERG.

My cue for frenzy?

BUCQUOI.

Leslie's prisoner—'twas young Von Mandersperg indeed—and Leslie hanged him.

VON MANDERSPERG

(With satisfaction).

Hanged? A dog's death!

TOLLOCHO.

Leslie's prisoner? But he was——

BUCQUOI.

At the last gasp he did confess himself Von Mandersperg. He hoped to save his neck thereby, but when Leslie saw the writing that you sent——

VON MANDERSPERG

(Rising eagerly).

What! A writing that you—that *you* had sent, Tollocho?

BUCQUOI.

Leslie hanged him out of hand. The devil's luck! A swift death that snatched him from us—and through you yourself—through you!

VON MANDERSPERG.

So! He is dead, this son of mine, through you, Tollocho—you! You've given him a dog's death, this son of mine, for my sake! You pine for tragedy, and I'll not play it? Play it yourself, man!

TOLLOCHO.

What do you aim at?

VON MANDERSPERG.

This boy—this son of mine you slew for my sake—who was this boy? Tell me! Whose son was he? Who was his mother?

TOLLOCHO.

His mother? Why do you ask me?

VON MANDERSPERG.

Because his mother was Elisabeth Waldstein.

TOLLOCHO.

Elisabeth! Her child!

VON MANDERSPERG.

Yes. And his father——

TOLLOCHO.

I see it! God! 'Tis your son by her—your base-born son that Leslie hanged! Yours—and Elisabeth's! Elisabeth's—and slain through me! Almighty God!

VON MANDERSPERG.

No! Not mine! And not base-born! Lawfully begotten in young wedlock. His father was the husband of Elisabeth Waldstein.

TOLLOCHO

(Rising).

What do you say? Elisabeth—my wife——

VON MANDERSPERG.

Your wife—and your own son!

TOLLOCHO.

My son! She bore my son—and I—and I——
[Reels where he stands.]

VON MANDERSPERG.

Yes, yours, Tollocho, yours! Reared as my natural child. I planned to strike you through him——

you that she loved—you to whom she clung, for all I held her body—I planned to strike you——

TOLLOCHO.

My son that I have slain!

[Sinks on a chair by the table.]

VON MANDERSPERG.

He balked my plans, the young whelp! He ran from me, but faith of man! I could not have shaped it better than it has fallen. Your son—your own—and you have given him a dog's death, as mine—your only son!

TOLLOCHO.

Elisabeth! Our son!

BUCQUOI

(Thrusting in between the two men).

Aye, Count, but we hold this other living in our hands.

VON MANDERSPERG

(Contemptuously).

What other?

BUCQUOI.

You have yourself a son, I believe.

VON MANDERSPERG.

Aye, and a lad too clever to stumble into your clutches! Not like this young thickhead Tollocho you have hanged.

BUCQUOI.

Are you so sure? For all his cleverness we have him prisoner, this young Von Mandersperg.

VON MANDERSPERG.

Von Mandersperg? You fool! My lad does not bear his own name when he goes upon a mission.

BUCQUOI.

Not his own name? But sure, this is your son! A young cornet of horse——

VON MANDERSPERG.

Seek you another prisoner, friend, ere you strive to fright me! My son is no hothead young subaltern—no horseboy like this brat of yours, Tollocho—this Hugo that you've hanged.

TOLLOCHO

(Starting up).

Hugo! Father of mercy! You said—Hugo?

VON MANDERSPERG.

You have your tragedy! Enjoy it, man!

TOLLOCHO.

Hugo! The boy—with her own eyes that looked upon me! Hers! And I would have sent him—I would have sent him—— My son! My son!

VON MANDERSPERG.

Aye, your own! Your own!

TOLLOCHO.

Pitiful God! I held my hand in time!

[Goes to the door to the inner room.]

Hugo! Hugo! Dear God! If I had let him——
Hugo!

VON MANDERSPERG.

Hugo! What madness——

[Sleepily and a little dazed HUGO comes into the room.]

HUGO.

You called me, sir?

TOLLOCHO

(His hands on HUGO's shoulders).

Look on me! Aye, her son! My son I almost had
sent living into hell!

[Draws the boy to him.]

VON MANDERSPERG

*(Speaking with difficulty, like one whose throat is
shriveled and dry).*

Then—who is he that Leslie hanged this hour?

BUCQUOI.

*(Evilly exultant as was VON MANDERSPERG a mo-
ment before).*

A clever lad who bore the name——

VON MANDERSPERG.

You devil! Speak!

BUCQUOI.

The name of Ansel Kaulbach.

VON MANDERSPERG

(Sits in chair by the table, where the papers still are outspread).

You see—you do not fright me. I laugh! I——
What paper's this? What hand?

[Snatches up a paper from the table.

God!

BUCQUOI.

His papers—Kaulbach's papers. You know the hand? You know the hand?

VON MANDERSPERG.

My boy!

BUCQUOI.

If you still doubt, come out with me! The ground is frozen hard. His grave is not yet dug. Come out and see his face—the face of this hanged spy!

TOLLOCHO.

Peace! The man has lost his only son.

VON MANDERSPERG.

Your pity? Hell's last jest! You pity me!

TOLLOCHO

(To HUGO).

Take you that cloak and come with me.

[HUGO wraps the cloak about him.

BUCQUOI.

Whither, kinsman?

TOLLOCHO.

To offer thanks—thanks that my Elisabeth was strong this hour to save our son!

[TOLLOCHO pushes open the door. It is seen that the dawn is just breaking. In the east is a faint red glow, and a rosy light shines on the snowy roofs of the village. He turns to HUGO.

Come—my son! It is dawn. We can see our way.

[TOLLOCHO passes out with his arm about HUGO's shoulders. BUCQUOI in the doorway watches them go into the dawn. At the table, under the pallid candlelight, VON MANDERSPERG sits crouching, with his head upon his arms.

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